CHRISTIAN HUMANISM

RUSSELL HENRY STAFFORD

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BY

RUSSELL HENRY STAFFORD

MINISTER OF THE OLD SOUTH CHURCH IN BOSTON

Willett, Clark & Colby

Chicago: 440 South Dearborn Street

1928

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PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

To the

OFFICERS AND MEMBERS

of

PILGRIM CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

in the

CITY OF SAINT LOUIS

in grateful acknowledgment of a happy pastorate

1923–1927

CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	The Good Life	1
II.	Can We Know God?	15
III.	God in Nature	26
IV.	In the Beginning	39
V.	Immanuel	50
VI.	The Still Small Voice	63
VII.	The Holy Trinity	75
VIII.	Light from the Scriptures	91
IX.	The Religion of Jesus	105
X.	The Beginning of the Gospel	118
XI.	Slave or Free?	131
XII.	What is Sin?	143
XIII.	What is Temptation?	157
XIV.	Hunger	170
XV.	Self-Seeking	183
XVI.	No Compromise	191
XVII.	Non-Resistance	203
XVIII.	Not of This World	216
XIX.	Loyalty	229
XX.	Tolerance	242

PREFACE

The sermons which comprise this volume were delivered in Pilgrim Congregational Church, Saint Louis. They are designed to present a continuous view of life, faith, and duty, in various aspects mutually supplementary, considered in the light of Christian humanism. By this term is meant a primary preoccupation with the betterment of individuals and society in this world, and an approach to the high mysteries of God by building toward these summits upon a foundation of tested experience and its inescapable implications.

The positions defended in this book are not presented as definitively established. But they represent the author's honest thought and convictions thus far. The purpose of publication will be achieved if any readers are stimulated by these discussions to a new, serious and open-minded interest in the fundamental problems of man's nature, source and hope.

Russell Henry Stafford

Old South Church in Boston,
January, 1928.

I

THE GOOD LIFE

Know ye not that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit . . . ? —I Corinthians 6:19

As at the Renaissance, so again in our day much of the best thinking is of the type known as humanism. Humanism is that type of thought which is interested in every phase of the life of mankind, but with reference to this world only. There are three main sources of the rise of contemporary humanism. One is an altruistic idealism, generously concerned for the improvement of living conditions—an effect of the quickening of the social consciousness. Another is the unprecedented progress of late of the applied sciences, making the adequate expression of this social idealism more feasible now than ever before. The third is a feeling, prevalent in many minds dominated by scientific concepts, of uncertainty as to whether there be any other world than this, so that concerning other possible realms of being it is deemed unwise to speculate.

The aims of humanism have never been better designated than in the title of a recent book by

the English philosopher, Mr. Bertrand Russell, "Education and the Good Life"—an excellent book, within the limitations of Mr. Russell's naturalistic viewpoint. Humanism, seeking the Good Life through education, is a force for the right, so far as it goes, and has found religious expression in the Ethical Movement, under the inspiration of that true prophet of righteousness, Felix Adler.

Now humanism has so many exponents conspicuous for lucid intelligence and elevated motive, that this type of thought must be attractive to every reflective person of our time, irrespective of his creed. But the Christian is disturbed as to the legitimacy of this interest because many humanists offer their views as an alternative to the Gospel. For they regard the Gospel as a system of metaphysics, chiefly concerned with the next world, and so belittling man's life on earth. Now it is undoubtedly true that the Gospel has often been misrepresented to this effect by zealous advocates of its claims. But we, within the fold of the Church, may well remind ourselves of a fact which outsiders are wont to overlook, namely, that the popular practice of Christianity has often departed far from the example and teachings of its founder. We shall, therefore, do well to study the life of our Lord from this standpoint, to inquire whether per-

chance Jesus himself may not have been more nearly in harmony with humanism than with the other worldliness of some of his avowed disciples. My own conclusion, upon making such a study, is that Jesus was a humanist; with this difference, that, while he was dominantly concerned with the life of mankind in this world, he nevertheless recognized consistently that heaven overarches the earth, giving warmth and light for earth-experience. By this conviction Jesus the humanist was released from the benumbing frigidity of agnosticism, and in him all that is good and attractive in humanism was infused with assurance and buoyancy, with such a glow as is lamentably lacking in most mere humanists.

Humanism, in search of the Good Life, is concerned, first, for the well-being of the body; for the body is the foundation of our life in this world. And it is often alleged that Christianity cares nothing for the body. Some of its dogmas would seem to indicate shame and contempt of physical processes. Some of its saints have hated the body, and hounded it into a premature grave by the repellent austerities of their asceticism. Granted; but no authorization for such contempt, not to say vilification, of the body, is to be found in Jesus. And surely he counts for more, in the religion he originated, than do any or all of his saints.

For we find Jesus honoring the body by healing the sick. How he healed them does not matter in this connection. He was at least concerned enough for health to be the enemy of disease, and sometimes to address himself to the restoration of men's bodies before he gave heed to their souls. So the follower of Christ should be at one with the humanist in caring well for the body, to preserve its harmonious functioning, or to restore such functioning when it has been impaired.

Further, beyond this negative tribute to the body in his regard for health, our Lord indicated by his own way of living, and by at least one telling phrase, a positive reverence for the body, such a reverence as would logically lead to deliberate physical culture in quest of true beauty. Beauty does not consist, be it noted, in pulchritude of form and appearance, which the light-minded seek through the accessories of the toilet, costume and cosmetics; rather it is a matter of the vigorous and effective interplay of sound nerves and strong, flexible, resilient muscles; of firm and disciplined physique. Jesus himself was a carpenter; he had built up his body in boyhood by hard and skilful labor. Through the period of his ministry, he kept fit by long pedestrian journeys; probably few if any of us could equal Jesus as a walker, and in general endurance. And the words of our text, to the effect

that the body is a temple of the Holy Spirit—remember what the Temple stood for in Israel—are an echo of certain words of our Lord himself about his death and resurrection: "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up" —an enigma which the evangelist explains by saying, "He spake of the temple of his body." There is food for much meditation in these words. He who marks and digests their significance can hardly ever again fall into the perverse error of some Christians, of holding the body in light esteem.

So far as we know, our Lord never witnessed an athletic contest. We know that the introduction of Greek games at Jerusalem by Antiochus Epiphanes, a half-dozen generations before Jesus, scandalized the pious prudery of the Hebrews. But we also know that Jesus judged all matters on their own merits, without subservience to mere traditional piety; and that St. Paul, who at all points strove to keep his thinking in harmony with that of the Master, was fond of drawing illustrations for the religious life from races and the arena. So I do not doubt that Jesus would have heartily approved that pursuit of physical fitness through systematic exercise which is the source of our modern interest in athletics, and which has lately found engaging literary expression in the wholesome muscular

idealism of Mr. Hugh Walpole's appealing hero, "Harmer John." Of this I am sure, that the Christian who does not do his best to make and keep his body well and strong is an unworthy representative of him who termed the body a temple.

A second element of the good life, as humanism conceives it, is acute and comprehensive capacity of intellect. And the humanists sometimes declare that Christianity has been hostile to education; not indeed to formal instruction in its own dogmas, but to the free cultivation of the mentality. What is more, they are to a degree right in so maintaining. Every Christian, familiar with the history of the Church, must feel embarrassment and confusion on account of the bigoted and reactionary reluctance of many Christian leaders through the centuries to accept new truths discovered by better minds than theirs.

But, again, let us turn from Christians to Christ. We find, first, that Jesus was a teacher. That was the title by which he was known to men of his time: "The Teacher." And, second, we find that he was by no means only a teacher of theology. To be sure, he did teach theology; no other has ever taught so clearly, convincingly and inspiringly the transcendental truths of God, duty and immortality, as he did. But per-

haps the reason why this is true is that his views of the Eternal spring not from absorption in technical problems touching the supernatural, but from a wide and genial interest in all phases of man's life on earth, very like the interest for which humanism stands. He taught as much psychology and sociology as theology. He was always pointing out peculiarities of mental procedure in diverse types and individuals, and indoctrinating his disciples in what he had found to be the best ways of getting along with all sorts and conditions of men. And that he was a nature-lover no one can question who observes what varied and apt illustrations he drew for his discourses from birds, and flowers, and winds, and how often he strayed away alone, on mountain paths, to contemplate the sea, the sky, and the rolling hillsides, and through the veil of nature to commune with nature's God.

Jesus lived at a time when the dawn of natural science, at Athens three centuries earlier, had been overcast. His were a land and a people untouched by scientific thought. But from his love of nature, and his gift for terse formulation of ideas as exact as they were novel, it is surely not unfair to surmise that, had he lived in an environment influenced by the scientific spirit of thorough and consecutive investigation of all natural phenomena, he would have been an en-

thusiastic exponent of that spirit. Indeed, I hold that there is good reason to believe that the rebirth of science in Christendom in the fifteenth century, and its subsequent development, are due, not so much to the rediscovery of the achievements of Hellenic genius, usually credited with this result, as to a fresh appreciation of Jesus' fearlessness, candor and open-mindedness toward truth of every order. So it is as surprising as it is deplorable that agnostic humanists should be able to attack the Church as anti-scientific, and to cite evidences in support of this indictment among benighted literalist adherents of the Christian creeds in our own day. The true Christian—he who has not accepted correct doctrines concerning the Saviour only, but has been kindled by his spirit of truth and love as well—will never admit that there is conflict between science and religion, but will love and honor science as an instrument for promoting religious ends, and for enlarging religious concepts.

Upon a sound mind in a sound body, as its basis, the humanist seeks to establish an ethic, a way of living or scheme of morals, which shall result in an achievement worthy to be called "The Good Life." And, as a first requirement for this ethic, the humanist is wont to insist that the individual must emancipate himself from the

mere conventionalities of customary behavior, in order to judge of right and wrong in any given situation primarily in terms of that situation, without bondage to precepts drawn from instances only loosely parallel. But it is frequently alleged that the Christian is above all others conventional in his notions of morality; that, indeed, he in effect defines righteousness as an inhuman excess of uncompromising obedience to general principles which to the unprejudiced observer would seem to be of doubtful cogency in many individual cases.

Of course, that has been and is true of many Christians. But it was by no means true of Christ. What caused most of his troubles was his impatience of platitudes, his insistent moral realism, his searching of motives, his scrutiny of the results of conduct rather than of its conventional correctness, his undisguised contempt for orthodox legalism and casuistry. He did not hesitate, by the authority of this independent insight of his, to correct, amend, reverse and supplement Moses and the Prophets. No wonder that he was accused of dangerous impiety! He was, in this regard, a humanist of the first water.

But it would be sadly misleading to convey the impression that humanism, in its renunciation of authoritarian ethics, sponsors anything like moral anarchy. Rather, it would define right-

eousness as that course of procedure, with relation to his own capacities, circumstances and associates, which for each individual is consonant with a clearly defined purpose for his individual career; with such a purpose, namely, as upon reflection, and after the event, is not likely to occasion remorse, but will rather lead forward into increasing personal fulfillment duly adjusted to the needs, the rights and the aspirations of others. Now surely that is just the sort of moral requirement which Jesus lays upon his disciples. No teacher was ever more reluctant to make his views binding upon his students in such a way as to stultify their thinking by inducing servile acceptance of his doctrine and obedience to his code. When he found a man whom he believed to be qualified to learn the higher lessons he had to impart, his one demand was, "Follow me"; that is, "Come live with me." Living with him, his disciples learned to live by the inner light, and to abide by the consequences with a certain high score of aberrant external authority. They learned that lesson so well, that all but one of the eleven steadfast members of the inner circle are reported to have paid the extreme forfeit to man-made law for their God-given independence. By his invitation to join forces with him Jesus gave to these men, moreover, a purpose in life, as the nucleus of their several systems, which cor-

responds perfectly with the humanist ideal. For their purpose became to live as he lived: interested in everything; well-disposed towards every one; enjoying a wholesome existence free of the cares of greed and lust, enriched by a vivid and expanding spiritual sensitivity: a life corresponding with the humanist ideal at its most exalted.

So it is safe to say that Jesus was a humanist, and that his disciples, therefore, should likewise be humanists, in the sense of being primarily interested in the life of mankind in this world, its liberation from bondage of every sort, and its improvement in every way. But Jesus' view of life was by no means limited, as is that of the humanist in the strict sense of the term, to this world in which he centered his interest. For he lived on earth by the light of heaven. So I want to raise the question, whether in fact the humanists of our day are right in supposing that we can know nothing about any world but this, and that it would add nothing to our well-being if we could. I believe that they are wrong. I believe that we can and do know that our life is not earth-bound. Let me condense the logical grounds of this assurance—which, however, is in essence an intuition—into a syllogism.

Man has within himself the impulse to create values—beauty, social harmony and the like—

which transcend nature, as the physical senses perceive it. It is with the cultivation of this creative spiritual activity that humanism is chiefly concerned.

Man himself, in whom this impulse arises, is a product and part of nature.

Therefore, there must be in or behind nature that which corresponds to this impulse, to these values, which nature produces; a realm and energy of Infinite and Eternal Spirit, overarching space and time.

That syllogism carries irresistible conviction to me. It is the foundation for belief in God. It answers no questions as to the apparent disharmony between natural processes and this supernatural realm; so it leaves us in some sense agnostic. But not in the humanist sense; for at least we may say that we are positive as to the existence of another world than this—another world to which our souls here show their affinity, and into which it is reasonable to suppose, therefore, that we shall some day wholly enter.

So soon as we admit the compelling force of this logical perception, supplementing our sensual perceptions with the vision of life eternal, we find that humanism—a catholic and zestful interest in the life of mankind on earth for the purpose of our growth and its improvement—has now a firm ground beneath its aspirations,

so that we can trust ourselves to love our fellowmen and to seek beauty, truth and goodness—the Good Life—without any depressing suspicion that we are beguiling ourselves with a wistful artifice, a mere baseless human invention. And when we know that God is behind and in humanity, and humanity goes forward to God, then there come moments of mystic intuition in rapt contemplation of beauty, as at sunrise, or of goodness, as in the life of Jesus; moments in which we feel the Eternal, so that we begin to pray. And, as we pray, we learn to hope. The humanist thinks he thinks that probably nothing will remain of all he has become, an instant after his demise; so how can he hope, when all he has is the vain mockery of a mere transient dream of an insubstantial ideal? But the Christian humanist knows that he knows that to live well and fully here is an achievement which will carry over into life hereafter, a life indeed uncharted and baffling to our limited imagination, but giving abiding substance to everything of worth which we have found or made or dreamed of on the earth. How, then, can the Christian humanist help hoping, and being a better humanist now—coming closer to the Good Life—for the encouragement of feeling that he shall be more than human when the earth is left behind?

I am glad that most of the best thinking of

our time is humanistic in its trend and emphasis. I hate other-worldliness, with its contempt for the flesh, its morbid yearnings for release from this glorious world where we now are, its narrowness of mind, its moral servility. But Jesus hated other-worldliness too. He wanted men to live the Good Life here and now. He showed them how. And he helps us to follow his example by leading us out of enervating agnosticism into a strong and stirring conviction that it is really worth while to lead the Good Life, because the Good Life corresponds to the ascendent Power in the universe. So we ought all to be Christian humanists, building independent careers, of ethical consistency, in pursuit of worthy aims, upon the foundation of a sound mind in a sound body; repudiating dogmatism and all illiberality; and, through the very zest of living here at our best, feeling our way into harmony of thought, purpose and soul with him who has given us our opportunities on earth, and will give us their full fruition in heaven.

CAN WE KNOW GOD?

What is truth?—St. John 18:38

As he proffers this query, Pilate stands under the lens of history as the type of the effete Roman aristocrat, in the twilight of the ancient gods, when the moral energies of the governing classes of the world's greatest empire were being sapped by dreary uncertainty as to the meaning of life—any valid purpose in human effort. It is in this endemic disease of the Roman mind in the later stages of Rome's dominion that the explanation is to be found of the downfall of classic civilization, and the advent of the Dark Ages, rather than in those barbarian incursions commonly held responsible, but with which Rome of the heroic age, with a real faith however unenlightened, could beyond doubt have coped successfully.

This dreary uncertainty is characteristic of thousands of minds among the privileged classes of the educated in our time. The forces of religion err disastrously when they direct their attention upon differences of creed among be-

lievers, while the whole religious position is undermined in widening circles of our contemporaries by a mood of agnosticism. The splendid accomplishments of the modern period will never dissolve in racial decline and retrogression through the triumph of any one school of faith over other schools; but disaster does surely impend unless all schools of faith combine in the energetic and effective presentation of that which is the common principle of them all, as against the growing sway of the paralysis of doubt as to the very being of God, which every honest observer must perceive to be the keynote of much recent thinking in widely influential quarters.

There is infinite pathos, engaging our profound sympathy, in the state of mind of those in our time who decline to take either the affirmative or the negative side of the question as to an adequate and satisfying significance in human experience; who will neither say that there is a God nor that there is no God, but who feel constrained to occupy what they sometimes describe as the middle position, inquiring simply, "Who knows?"—which is the same as Pilate's query, "What is truth?" The tragic aspect of this middle position is that it cannot maintain itself as a rational mean between two extremes, but in practice is identified with the negative side of

the question. He who says that he does not know whether there be a God or not, acts, of logical necessity, as though he were sure that there is no God. Thus agnosticism is a subtle form of atheism, and a peculiarly depressing form; for those who embrace this point of view are not likely to have even that crusading fervor against benighted superstitions, for the emancipation of human thought, which does frequently inspire avowed atheists to serve the cause of progress with a will, however short-sightedly and mistakenly as to their first premise.

If a man does not feel sure whether there be a God or not, his emotional life must starve. The emotions most productive of personal happiness and creatively contributory to general welfare are love and hope. But love, in a world in which all things pass and our own personalities are presumably doomed to early extinction, must be reduced to terms of the reproductive and gregarious instincts only, deprived of all putative higher significance; consequently, held in a measure of contempt as an irrational outworking of our brute nature which must not be permitted to interfere with the cold requirements of reason as to advantageous adjustment to our environment. And likewise, in such a world hope must be restricted to ends attainable in the present chapter of our existence only, while we are on the

earth; though it is evident to every thinking man that there are no ends on earth worth hoping for with our essentially personal energies—which are spiritual and require eternity for their satisfaction—if eternity be not postulated. To be sure, some agnostics are not conscious of this fatal foreshortening of emotional perspective; but they can only overlook it by refusing to consider the implications of their intellectual position. Thus, in proportion to the thoroughness of his thinking, the man who is not sure of God is deprived, along with that certainty, of the joys which alone could give flavor to his being.

Again, as it starves the emotions, agnosticism also arrests the will. For if a man have not the conviction that all his work fits in somehow with an inclusive plan, so that, however trivial it may appear, it is assured of final value, he will hardly care to make the most of his opportunities, to rise courageously over obstacles, to spur himself on in defiance of indolent inclinations to the performance of the manifold duties which life seems to lay upon him. For, of course, duty itself in such a case is without clear and inspiring authority. The theoretical agnostic who is a practical atheist will always be asking, "Cui bono?" —that is, "What's the use?" And such a viewpoint is but too likely to result in cynically resigned idleness, painfully contrasting with that

zestful and vigorous approach to the world's business which alone can afford the individual reasonable self-respect, and contribute to the improvement of conditions affecting others also.

Moreover—and perhaps even more lamentably, since we have come to associate progress with that mastery over the material universe which comes through intimate knowledge of its processes—this middle position of radical uncertainty clips the wings of the imagination, which is the most indispensable servant of science, and thus curtails intellectual activity. It is by projecting their fancy beyond the region of the ascertained to find a goal toward which research shall aim, that men of learning are led out into broadening areas of discernment as to the world's problems and possibilities. But if all we can find at the utmost confines of space and time be but a machine so far as we can see, and any abiding value in this machine and its operations persistently elude our observation, there will presently appear to be no object worthy of our capacities to be served by further examination of an environment which tastes flat to our souls. To feel oneself shut in upon a little island of the known within vast seas of the hopelessly unknowable is to lose all ambition to explore the seas and find new continents beyond them.

Thus it is evident that the refusal, more or less

reluctant, to endorse any certainty about the issues of being, which is the mental attitude of multitudes in our time, is, from the standpoint of all that we instinctively cherish, dreadfully undesirable. And some of us have the courage to maintain that a position which starves the emotions, arrests the will, and deprives the intelligence of the impulse of hopeful curiosity must in the nature of things be false. But the agnostic will reply that we have no warrant for supposing that things must be as we wish they were. It may be unfortunate that we do not know the answer to the deeper questions about being which occur inevitably to our minds; but what right have we to invent answers for our own pleasure, and adopt them, in the absence of conclusive evidence that the answers thus invented are correct?

That seems to be a fair challenge to our faith. But it would have more weight for me if our agnostic friends were able to maintain consistently that attitude of open-minded uncertainty which is their boast. As we have already seen, however, in practice they usually endorse the negative side of the basic question whether or not there be a God. And in theory likewise they are in most instances guilty of self-contradiction. For when a man says, "I do not know," we are moved to ask him, "Why do you not look into the matter and find out?" And to this, in nine

cases out of ten, the agnostic will reply: "Because I cannot know; we confront the unknowable at the frontiers of our immediate experience; our utmost endeavors will not suffice to scrutinize it." But one already knows a good deal about the Unknowable when one knows that it is indeed unknowable! This amounts to a positive theory of what philosophers call the Absolute; namely, "The Absolute is that which men cannot know." Now there is nothing truly agnostic about this middle position as it is thus defined by many who occupy it. It becomes simply a rival assertion, in affirmative terms, to the religious assertion that God is an Infinite Person; to the Christian assertion that God is a loving Father. And so soon as the issue is thus defined as a competition among metaphysical concepts, no Christian need fear but that his belief will win the day.

Self-contradictory though the agnostic view be, yet there must be some ground of appeal in it to account for its wide prevalence among thoughtful men today. That ground is, as I maintain, a misunderstanding as to what constitutes knowledge. The agnostic is usually a man whose training has been predominantly scientific. Science moves primarily within the realm of those aspects of being which we perceive through the five physical senses. Scientific

knowledge is therefore circumscribed within matter; and the man whose thought has principally been within scientific categories is inclined, consequently, to limit knowledge to that which is susceptible of sensible proof. Yet science itself, when, under the guidance of facts already ascertained, it devises an hypothesis going beyond those facts to account for them, does move out from the existing frontiers of the sense-world into the region of "moral certainty:" a different kind of knowledge, arrived at by logic rather than directly by observation, and yet knowledge nevertheless. The scientist is as certain about various facts having to do with the structure of the atom and with the general course of the development of the universe and of life, as though he had actually seen them; although this, of course, he has not done. So the agnostic makes a grievous mistake when he supposes, under the influence of the scientific habit, that we can be certain of nothing beyond our immediate experience. As a matter of fact, we are all certain of many things which are interpretations of experience rather than bare sense-impressions. We are certain of beauty, and of love, and of principle, though we have never seen or handled them. And religion does no more than to propose an hypothesis, if you like to call it that, which includes all the facts attested by the

senses, and interprets them in terms of meaning which alone can meet the demands of the facts themselves, and their obvious and incontrovertible interdependence. Christian faith states, in essence, that conscious purpose is in control of the universe, and that in quality or character this conscious purpose is like Jesus. All subtleties of the competitive creeds of Christendom are but elaborations of that central theme. And that theme contributes an hypothesis to which we are led by the facts of life themselves; an hypothesis which we cannot prove in any laboratory, but without which all laboratory proofs are denuded of value; and which does therefore constitute a definite certainty for all minds which weigh and test it fairly.

So those of our contemporaries are mistaken who suffer from the paralysis of doubt about God, leading in practice to denial of Him, because we cannot take His dimensions on any physical scale, or analyze His substance in any test-tube. We are positive about many things in everyday life, whatever our academic conclusions may be, which are equally undemonstrable in a scientific sense. But when a man adopts the Christian hypothesis—which has been better stated in that glowing phrase, "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself"—and proceeds to act as though it were true, then

he finds that, like every other sound induction, it works. And his assurance mounts through degree after degree of certainty until presently he can say, with no leap in the dark void of mere guess-work, nor any insincerity whatever, "I know that my Redeemer liveth!" When a man reaches that point, love and hope receive a new charter; his will is energized for new conquests; and his intelligence becomes the willing and acute instrument of new discoveries ministering to the welfare of his kind.

It is not in the heart of any true Christian to condemn or to scorn the unfortunate people who think that God cannot be known. But it is the great task of the Church, in ministry to the awakened mind of the world, so to re-interpret the eternal truths of our faith as to articulate them with the peculiar mental processes of the twentieth century, and to explain acceptably in their terms that deep assurance of abiding value and high purpose in life which is native to the human breast, and is defined by our religion. We sympathize with all who doubt. But with courage and without apology we educated Christians must persuasively reiterate our affirmations that God is; and that He is like our blessed Lord; and that life is only worth the trouble it costs when it is lived in harmony with the divine character thus revealed. If these be

assumptions, they are far more reasonable assumptions than the self-contradictory dogma of the Unknowable; so reasonable, indeed, that we hold them to be matters of genuine knowledge. And unless we win the doubters of our time to a fresh and inexpugnable conviction of celestial realities, social degradation must ensue upon the theoretic doubts and practical atheism of our age.

Confronting each other through the centuries, and still today, stand Pilate, pitiable for the question on his lips, despite his insignia of magistracy: a symbol of sullen infamy presaging social downfall; and Jesus, a prisoner at the bar, yet kingly despite his man-inflicted humiliations, and the incarnate promise of humane progress through virile faith in divine Providence. Where lies the truth, as between these two? You and I know. It is for us to lead the doubting toward participation in our assurance, that it may be well with them and with the future of civilization.

III

GOD IN NATURE

The earth is full of the lovingkindness of the Lord.
—Psalm 33:5b

Everybody with a healthy mind realizes that we live in a brilliant and glorious world, the wonders of which invite us to investigate every department of it which may be accessible to our curiosity. It is this appreciation which is responsible for the sense of adventure which has impelled men to explore the surface of the earth, and thereby open up vast regions of interest to our minds, and for colonization and commercial exploitation. But this sense of adventure is no less in evidence as the motive for scientific observations of the universe. From the time when men first looked up at the stars as at lamps hung by night in the sky for the earth's illumination, through the period when dawning perception of the true nature of the stellar display led men to feel that through their telescopes they were observing mere outlying provinces of the cosmos beyond our central planet, until our own day, when we know that the earth is not the center but

a speck of dust on the periphery of infinitude, it has been the appreciation of the enticing marvels of the world which has led to such investigation. And this is equally true of the reverse type of observation, in which men have progressed from casual remark upon those organisms and geologic details which are of minute mass, until and through the era of the microscope, opening up new realms of bewildering complexity in the infinitesimal to the astonished and enraptured eye of the human observer.

I am convinced, moreover, that the development of philosophy is due, no less than are the exploration of the earth's surface and the scientific analysis of the world's elements and constitution, to a feeling of the enchanting splendor of our material environment, challenging our minds to attempt to comprehend its total and ultimate significance. As an astronomer need never go farther from his own house than his observatory to behold the wide domains of the skies, so stay-at-home philosophers—like Immanuel Kant, who never left the little German province of his birth—have nevertheless, by projecting their minds upon the deepest problems of existence, been explorers of the world, as truly as are they who go down to the sea in ships and traverse jungles and deserts on far continents.

When we examine external nature, which are

those of its attributes which most impress our imagination? First, power. We cannot but stand in awe of the mighty forces of nature, not only when they are dramatically displayed in those convulsions of tempest and earthquake to which the earth is subject, but also, upon reflective view, when we contemplate them in equable counterpoise, as they hold the seasons on their course and swing the planets in their orbits.

Second, precision. The delicacy of adjustments throughout the universe, whereby, for instance, a solar eclipse can be predicted with infallible accuracy, to the second, centuries before its occurrence; while, on the diminutive scale which balances these colossal phenomena, the form of the snow crystal is a marvel of intricate and unmarred symmetry, and even the structure of the atom is found to be a miniature of the universe, and through all the range between the atom and the star—this delicacy passes the power of the mind fully to conceive, and staggers the imagination of the most meticulous artist among us. In this precision of all cosmic processes is to be found an overwhelming indication that intelligence presides over them all, small and great. It is impossible to suppose that accident, productive only of chaos within our experience, could on the immeasurably extended scale of the universe produce exact and irrefragable order.

Third, unity. The primitive mind views nature as a realm of many competing powers. There is much in nature, at a casual glance, to justify this view. Nevertheless, the further we explore, the more extensively and intensively we investigate, the more indisputable does it become that all that is constitutes a continuous whole—one creation, or enterprise, if you please, and one only—corresponding, in the strangest fashion, yet demonstrably, to that demand for a universe which is born in us from the essential unity of each personality despite the diversities of its moods and capacities.

Might, intelligence, continuity—these are characteristics of the world which cannot escape the eye of the rational and penetrating observer. But these do not meet our crying desire for a quality in the universe satisfying our hearts and affording sure sanction for our ideals. The Psalmist exclaimed, "The earth is full of the lovingkindness of the Lord." Some loving-kindness there obviously is, to be sure, in the earth, and in its immeasurable environment, the universe; but how much else would there seem to be beside! The same garden which yields us fruits and flowers brings forth poisons and harbors the snake. The same sky which radiates benignity upon us on a calm summer day is now and again darkened, and filled with the blind fury of deso-

lating storm. The same sea which in one mood lulls us to dreamy rest on its placid bosom, in another surges angrily to overwhelm our lives in cold and forlorn destruction. The very earth which seems so solid beneath our feet sometimes trembles, dances and yawns beneath us, tumbling our staunchest structures into dust. If we must judge of the Lord—that is, of the first cause of all things; that is, of the moral quality inherent in all things—by the revelations of outer nature alone, then I fear we must reluctantly confess that we cannot believe Him to be kind with any degree of consistency, but must at best conceive of Him as of uncertain temper, a wayward monarch alternating aimlessly between serene mercy and horrible violence.

And yet I agree with the Psalmist: I enjoy an unwavering conviction that God—that is, the Intelligence which is the source and governor of all being—is utterly good and unchangeably kind. The Psalmist must have been aware, as we are, of those terrifying paroxysms of physical nature which seem to deny this postulate of his faith and ours. He must have heard thunder, and seen the lightning strike; he lived in a land of tempests, drouth and earthquake, on the border of the tortured and treacherous Mediterranean. What, then, was the ground of his faith in the loving-kindness of the Lord? What is the

ground of ours? Not a detached judgment upon the findings of our five senses as though these were final evidence of truth; but a conviction inherent in our very being, and which all men share who consent to continue to live: the inner and inescapable assurance, in spite of all perils and catastrophes which might hint the contrary, that life is worth living. If you believe that life is worth living, that means that you believe that life is good, and therefore that He is good who gives you life.

Not one of us can prove that this conviction is true. But every one of us shares it. It constitutes the great assumption that lies at the root of human life itself, and consequently of all human thought which has value and is destined to endure. Sometimes a pessimistic philosopher arises to assure us that this subjective faith in the value of life is a mere impression on our minds of an irrational vital urge in our physical organisms. But it is to be noted that even such philosophers usually continue to live, and contend in behalf of their theories with a vigor which is in itself a strong, albeit perverse, testimony that they hold it to be tremendously worth while to know the truth and to share it with others; in other words, they cannot get away from the conviction which they impugn.

But, if there be any meaning at all in the con-

cept of truth, that must be true which is thus ineradicable from our minds. So—call it a gamble if you will; at least the odds are on my side—I believe with all my heart that life is good. And so do you. And that assumption is the starting point for trust in the loving-kindness of the Lord. If we take this much for granted, and think from this point forward by logical steps, we can arrive at nothing less than that doctrine of God—of the One who is not only almighty but also all-merciful—in which only can our hearts find rest.

Thus it is not through our observation of external nature, but rather by an inner light, that we see God. The name for that inner light is faith; and it is present at least in rudiment in every human mind. The next step in faith, beyond acceptance of the fact of God, is to expect to find His likeness in human nature at its best. We, to whom the gospel has come, are privileged to know human nature at its best in the person of Christ Jesus our Lord. In him whom the ages acclaim as the noblest of the sons of earth, we are assured by faith that we contemplate a transcript of the character of God in terms within the scope of our comprehension. And that coincides with what our Lord claims for himself. So, knowing him, we are confident that we know the very heart of the Eternal; that we have a

revelation in personal terms, far surpassing His manifestations in the outer order, of the one omnipotent Mind who indwells the universe; and who must be good, if indeed life be, as we believe, worth living.

So as Christians we bring to our search for God in nature this criterion of His essential quality, derived from spiritual rather than from material sources. In other words, we know God independently of nature, so that we know what to look for when we look in nature for Him. And that transforms our outlook upon the universe from one of terror of its apparent ruthlessness toward us to one of appreciation for all its fair aspects, while we overlook and in some sort discount its severer aspects as phases of reality for which we cannot as yet account, but which must somehow surely be overruled and used to fit in as elements in the outworking of the cosmic providence of divine love.

From this point of view, the tragedies of nature are not, of course, hidden from us. But a number of considerations justify us in our attitude of untroubled agnosticism as to their real significance. First, by analyzing our physical senses, through which we note the outer order, we have discovered their limitations. They respond only to certain definitely limited ranges of ethereal vibration. There may be many other

ranges of which we can take no cognizance and have no concept.

Second, by analysis of our minds we have discovered the limitations of our conceptual range. We perceive space, in which the outer order is extended, in three dimensions only—height, breadth and length. It is at least an interesting speculation, and perhaps points toward the solution of many problems beside that of natural evil, as to whether, in space as in mathematics, there may not be several, and perhaps many, other dimensions, of the nature of which we can have no idea whatever; so that we must perforce take an extremely limited view of nature, and withhold our ethical judgment upon it because of our insuperable ignorance at the terrestrial stage of our personal development.

Corresponding to these criticisms of our sensible and conceptual capacities is the doctrine of all idealists since Plato, that what we call matter is but a projection of our mental state; in which case the disasters of time and space are to be regarded simply as manifestations of the errors of our finite minds rather than as real factors in the world as God made and knows it.

Again, because we know so little, we cannot see, save from below, the pattern God is weaving in the looms of time; and no pattern can be judged correctly from its under side. This

figure suggests, moreover, that creation may still be under way, rather than long since completed —a suggestion borne out by many findings of the natural sciences. Then what we call life's pains and troubles may be but litter and noise of the passing disorder of a building process.

And, finally, it is certain that if, with our present mental constitution, we were exposed to no dangers, we should lack incentive to improve our control over our environment and should consequently suffer arrest instead of achieving growth. If there were no storms or winter, there would be no houses; but the dawn of civilization occurred when men built the first house. If there were no lightning, we should not have discovered electricity, and harnessed it to our projects of economic betterment.

So you see that there are many considerations which justify us in paying very little attention to what seems to us to be the dark side of nature; in merely noting it, and confessing that we cannot account for it as yet, and then leaving it with God, who does understand it; and in whom we trust because we see Him, by the inner light of faith, as a Being of infinite goodness, though our observation of the outer order teaches us no more than that He is one, that He is intelligent, and that He is almighty. This spiritual conviction, however, will lead us inevitably in reverent en-

thusiasm to look for as many evidences of God as we can find in nature, and to dwell with gratitude upon those aspects of His being which are clearly made manifest to us there, along with so much we cannot fathom.

"The earth is full of the lovingkindness of the Lord!" First, His goodness—His open hand of provision and aid for His children in this region of finite discipline. Have you been in the country at the spring of the year, and seen the fields green with the first shoots of the crops out of the brown loam? There surely is displayed the loving-kindness of God, who gives us year after year food for our bodies by sending the cyclic visitations of the seasons and the caresses of the rain and sun; and from whom come also, out of His treasuries in the earth, the raw materials of all our industries, whereby we are not only fed but clothed and sheltered, and equipped for ever more extensive conquest over our surroundings, and ever larger life of the spirit as well.

Second, there is His truth, His dependability. I should think every scientist would love God; for the scientists are they who most appreciate, because they most depend upon, the absolute consistency of the laws of God in nature. Take the simplest of all rules, in the most accessible of all sciences: 2 plus 2 equals 4. That holds true

everywhere and all the time. We might, I suppose, have been put into a world where 2 plus 2 would equal 3 yesterday and 5 tomorrow; it is of the loving-kindness of God that these things do not vary, so that we have something to count upon. Morning will come tomorrow. Spring will return next year. The earth will not fall into the sun. And the same God who is thus forever, so to speak, guaranteeing weights and measures, is also forever loving us, as our Lord loved his fellow men.

And, finally and inexhaustibly, there is the beauty of the world, in demonstration of God's loving-kindness. Ought I to try to wax eloquent about the beauty of nature? But what good could any eloquence do? If you do not see this beauty for yourself, I cannot reveal it to you. If you do see it for yourself, you ought to be ashamed ever to let a day go by without thanking God for His glory, revealed in sunlight and starlight, trees and streams, mountains and prairies.

If we really believe in God, we shall not worry about those aspects of nature which we cannot understand. We shall be looking for and dwelling gratefully upon the good things in life, because in them at least we know that we see the very likeness of His character, the clear forthshowing of His good will toward us. We shall,

moreover, cultivate the habit of seeing and appreciating the goodness in life as a gift from God's generous hand, in order that we may render ever more and more acute our spiritual sensibilities, to be prepared for that later period in the pilgrimage of our souls when we shall advance beyond our present limitations into fuller perception of the real universe; when we shall know it in all its dimensions through and through, and in the cosmos thus discerned shall doubtless behold without shadow the glorious reflection of God's heart of infinite love, which is now made known to us in earthly terms in the life and ministry of our blessed Redeemer.

IV

IN THE BEGINNING

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. —Genesis 1:1

This account of the creation—which, though the later in date of composition, stands first in order of the two with which the book of Genesis opens—purports to be an historical narrative. But the man who wrote it was clearly a poet. So it is legitimate to suppose that, by the phrase "in the beginning," beyond its obvious primary reference to time, he intended to convey to reflective readers a reference also to logical sequence: a suggestion for the focusing of their interest; an invitation to attend to first principles, to turn away from the confusing details of human experience, and consider it in its broad bearings and sustaining outline.

This poet, with his deep view of reality, can hardly have been unaware that many familiar phenomena seem to belie his central assertion that God is the spring of all existence. But his aim was to convey so positive an assurance as to this first principle that secondary matters seeming to

conflict with it would appear, in the corrected perspective of the certainty of divine purpose in the universe, as problems only for our limited understanding, which we are to assume to be comprehended and solved within the all-inclusive synthesis of the Infinite Mind which he postulates.

The theory of creation, which our poet asserts or assumes, is fraught with an apparent difficulty. For it seems to mean the making of something out of nothing; and that is so without parallel in our experience as to awaken our incredulity. But the notion that God made an alien substance, matter, by the mere exercise of His will—conjuring it, as it were, from a void—involves a naïve dualism of spirit and matter which, though persistent in popular thinking, can hardly sustain critical examination. If, as recent scientific investigations of the nature of matter would seem to establish, matter be in the last analysis energy; and if, under the persuasion of a belief in God derived from considerations more penetrating than the observations of science, we hold that God is the cardinal and all-pervasive energy of the universe; then creation becomes, not the making of something out of nothing, but a specific purposeful differentiation of pre-existent energy. And the doctrine in this form presents no serious obstacle to our acceptance of it.

But it was certainly not in the interest of any theory about creation, as a philosophical concept of the mode in which the world came to be, that this poet and seer composed his sublime and imposing epic of first things. Rather, he fashioned this epic to be a shrine, captivating to the imagination, for his glorious and inspiring statement of the first principle, behind and in all things: God; that is, a supreme constructive Intelligence, producing and conserving spiritual values; in other words, goodness as the conscious purpose of all being.

This doctrine, that the world—not the earth only, but the whole universe, in which the earth, as we now know, is but as a grain of dust—is in the last analysis attributable to and governed by the holy will of an infinite Intelligence, is supported in the realm of reason by four classical propositions known as the cosmological, the teleological, the ontological and the moral arguments. There is no need in the present context to discuss these arguments; but a statement is in order as to how far they seem to me to suffice for the satisfaction of our intellects. I do not think that severally or collectively they prove conclusively that God is; that is to say, they do not demonstrate His being in such a way as to render it impossible for a rational and informed mind to question it. Nevertheless, these arguments sat-

isfy the reason, in that they attest an overwhelming probability, a probability so sweeping that far more credulity is required to doubt the truth to which it witnesses than to accept it. And, inasmuch as most of our decisions, after all, in the practical affairs of life, must be rendered upon the basis of probability, while even the sciences are hedged about with interrogations as yet unanswerable, one may justly maintain that a well-balanced mind would be constrained to believe in God on rational grounds, even if all other grounds were lacking.

But belief in God does not commonly arise from rational considerations. It goes so much deeper than that, that the sort of belief which depends upon logic for its sole support, as some philosophers hold it, is wont to be a cold, joyless and inert opinion, without the dynamic quality which pertains to real faith. It is rather by love of God Incarnate, as we behold Him in the goodness of others, and above all in the character of Jesus Christ, and with the subjective confirmation which the still small voice of God affords in the many tones of conscience within our own breasts, that we achieve a faith which is no mere barren hypothesis but a vital and transforming energy. Holding this faith, then, on the grounds named, and with gratitude for the auxiliary support afforded to our conviction by the compelling

probability of the logical arguments for God's being, we are now to look for indications of God's presence in the outer order, the world of things.

Be it noted, however, that we are not to be disturbed by observing that the values which are subsumed by hypothesis in God's being are not discernible uniformly in all phases of our earthly experience. For we are not testing our faith by the world, but bringing our faith to the world, and will therefore disregard the incongruous aspects of life on earth, constituting collectively the problem of evil, as beyond our present comprehension, but surely understood and provided for by our Creator.

One climactic manifestation of divine goodness is especially to be expected in the world, if indeed goodness be the conscious purpose of all being; namely, progress. Here we touch a quivering nerve of current controversy. Is there progress in this world of ours? The problem posed thus baldly is not susceptible of a simple answer. It requires to be analyzed into three elements. First, if we ask if there be progress up to the level of humanity, the answer is in the affirmative. The whole story of evolution is of successive change for the better; with many deviations, with frequent arrests and failures, with an amount of wastage on the way which at first glance seems appalling, but nevertheless steadily in the direc-

tion of the achievement of consciousness, and the consequent appreciation and expression of spiritual values: from the inorganic to the organic; in the organic, from the plant to the animal; in the animal, from the invertebrate to the vertebrate; in the vertebrate, from the rude forms small and great of prehistoric time to homo sapiens. The natural sciences, in their review of the past, tell the story of one increasing purpose, a purpose worthy of God.

Second, is there progress in the social relations of mankind? No student of history or of sociology can fail to respond to this question also in the affirmative. From the cave-dweller in the primeval forest to the apartment-dweller in the modern city may seem to the cynic a change without essential difference; but that is because the cynic never dwelt in a cave in the primeval forest. There is between the first stages of society known to us and the stage at which we have arrived a progress almost incalculable in health, wealth, intelligence, successful adaptation to environment, mutual aid, and resultant plenitude of circumstances and longevity.

But here we need to note, as against that enthusiastic but undiscriminating trust in social evolution which has inspired much utopian theorizing in recent decades, that the progress of society is by no means ordained in the nature of

things. It depends upon the exercise of man's free choice in the interest of ever more advanced civilization. Our Lord taught us to pray, "Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven"; whence we conclude that he contemplated a world-inclusive social order of peace, justice and security, as well within the range of possibility. But that he deemed its advent inevitable is a sad misreading of his intention, which was to urge his followers to labor and sacrifice for an end of which human hope might be cheated if they did less than their best, rather than to invite them to take their ease in idle apocalyptic expectation of a favorable trend of events in and of themselves. But surely no man who respects himself would ask that God should take away the freedom of the race, and, as it were, doom mankind to ineluctable progress. It is enough in this connection—it shows forth the delicacy of God's handling of men, as well as the imperative insistence of His demands upon them —that we discover in human society the bare potentiality of continued advance, which it rests with men to actualize or not.

Third, we must ask if there be a succession of changes for the better in human nature itself through the fast-following generations. Here I think that our answer must be in the negative. And it is because they observe that human nature,

in its instincts, and in its errors, shortcomings and sins in consequence, remains ever essentially the same despite all modifications of manners, that some social philosophers pour scorn upon the hope of progress as a vain dream, discredited by incontrovertible facts.

Certainly the fact is incontrovertible that men of the twentieth century after Christ have the same passions and are susceptible to the same temptations, broadly speaking, as were undergone by men of the twentieth century before Christ. Every child is born, so far we can see, a mere animal, and must pass through the stages of savagery and barbarism before he achieves the status of a civilized being. And any child, whatever his lineage, who should be consigned to the care of savages from infancy, would indubitably grow up a mere savage, like his foster-family. Does this, however, negate our conviction that God is to be found throughout the world, as well as in the characters of good men and the hearts of the spiritually enlightened?

It would, if life on earth comprised the whole history of a man. If, when we die, we are dead, then not only is progress, which fails to modify human nature in its essentials, illusory, but all spiritual values must by a consistent logic be pronounced illusory as well.

But here belief in immortality comes to our

aid. It is a mistake to suppose that belief in immortality is just a tenet of religion in its more advanced types, arrived at by a process of reasoning upon dreams, shadows, reflections, and the like, as some anthropologists have maintained. It rests rather upon an intuition inseparable from self-consciousness itself—the distinctive mental endowment of man. It is because of this inescapable intuition that men have deemed it worth while to reason about dreams and shadows, and have thus arrived at various pictorial representations of future existence. Christianity, in its pure form, offers no such pictorial representation, but the simple and sufficient assurance that life does go on, and under the guidance and care of Him from whom it came in the first instance.

So, without attempting to define the circumstances of the future state, we Christians regard man's life on earth as a mere antechamber, a place of preparation for a larger life beyond. In other words, it becomes to us one grade, primary or, it may be, intermediate, in the school in which the Divine Mind is educating our souls.

But in no school grade is progress in the human materials found therein year after year to be discovered or expected. As one class is promoted, another class succeeds which has just attained the initial level of the class preceding it. So, for example, a fifth grade teacher may teach

fifth grade pupils throughout her career; but no doubts are justified as to her pupils' capacity later to master sixth grade subjects, simply on the ground that in the nature of the case they will never master those subjects under her direction.

The generations of mankind succeed each other like classes in a school-room. On this view of our life on earth, social progress is to be understood on the analogy of better housing, increased facilities and improved methods provided for pupils as times change and the community prospers; but that human nature itself should remain at the same level not only fails to surprise or shock us, but is clearly what we have to expect.

In this doctrine of an early poet with piercing insight into cosmic mysteries, that "in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth," we have that assertion of God's transcendence, of His logical and causal priority in the world of things, which is needed if our understanding of God, as incarnate in human character, and as immanent in human hearts, is to become a full-orbed view of the divine majesty. It is supported by philosophical arguments establishing a probability in its behalf which is little short of coercive upon our minds. It is attested by our discoveries of beauty, of truth or dependability, of goodness in general and of goodness in its

special form of progress, in the life of this planet, which is our temporary home.

Of God transcendent, the Creator, one greater than this poet has taught us to think in immeasurably more tender and intimate terms, organic to our very existence, as our Father: no mere artificer of things and men, but the progenitor and loving protector of mankind, providing this planet for their shelter and training as an earthly parent provides a house for his children.

To accept this interpretation of the universe—to come to feel that, however ill or little we understand some of His ways, we can nevertheless rest in the confidence that God presides over the destinies of stars and souls alike—is to achieve a reassurance, in the face of life's adversities and terrors, which lifts us above the despondent suspicion that we are spiritual aliens intruded by accident upon a heartless and meaningless realm of dead matter and blind force, and establishes us in the heartening and inspiring conviction that we are at home in God's own world, now and forever.

V

IMMANUEL

It is God, that said, Light shall shine out of darkness, who shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.
—II Corinthians 4:6

Christianity consists essentially in a personal relation to a Person. The significance of that divine personality, whom we call our Lord and Savior, is nowhere more clearly expressed than in this ecstatic utterance of the first Christian theologian, which may be taken to explain a name borrowed by Christian faith from the prophecies of Isaiah to describe Jesus, "Immanuel," that is to say, "God with us." We love and serve Christ because in him we see God manifested.

The question suggests itself, whether the manifestation of God in Christ be unique in kind as well as in degree; or whether revelation of the divine Being through human nature be a continuous process throughout religious experience. If the latter be the case, we shall find our consent to this fundamental article of our creed confirmed; for modern thought views with confidence those processes which are continuous throughout

life, while it entertains a suspicion, justified by all observations thus far, of alleged facts emerging at a given point anomalously, without parallels or foreshadowings.

How do men come to believe in God? Not, I am convinced, in the first instance, by reasoning. To be sure, when once we do believe in God, it is evident to us that He is the First Cause of all being. But men do not address themselves to the problem of the First Cause until the intellect has achieved a considerable degree of competence; whereas men believe in God—that is, in the Unseen, of which the Christian doctrine of God is the most specific and elevated definition—long before they begin to deal in logical abstractions. Belief in God rests primarily upon feeling: upon an attitude of appreciation toward the universe, whereby we embrace the assurance that life is full of meaning, and that the meaning or purpose of life, despite all its storms and darkness which would appear to contradict this assurance, is in harmony with the high requirements of moral goodness. Now what is the ground of this appreciative and trustful feeling?

There are people who think that it is of biological origin; that our conviction that life is worth living is just the vital urge rationalized. Every living thing, they say, clings to life by the law of its organic existence; and man, the reflect-

ing animal, gives this instinctive attachment to life a form of reason in the claim that the purpose of life is in accordance with his own deepest longings and most exalted aims. But to this biological reading of the affirmation that life as a whole is good, there are two insuperable objections. The first is that the vital urge, as expressed in the struggle for existence, has nothing to do with moral goodness, but rather encourages qualities opposed to it: ruthlessness and ferocity. The second is that men sometimes come to a place where disappointment and fatigue have taken away their personal love of living, so that they would be glad to pass quietly and utterly away into the peace of oblivion; yet even then they retain almost always their certainty that, however ill their own lives have turned out, life as a whole is good. So we must seek our explanation of this certainty elsewhere than in the mere rationalizing of the vital urge.

And, as it seems to me, we shall find it in the influence of personality. It is because we see goodness incarnate and regnant in the human nature of those whom we trust and revere that we attribute this moral quality to the totality of experience, and are persuaded that goodness is the very principle of universal being. Let us see how these impressions of divine reality are made upon our minds.

First, the child sees, in his father and mother, power, since they govern him; wisdom, since their judgment is proved by his testings to be better than his own; and love, since they are tender toward him, and he presently awakens to the realization that to provide for his needs they will unhesitatingly make any sacrifice. Not all parents are as good as their children think them; but, in relation at least to the child's helplessness and ignorance, they do rightly and effectively represent God. And the child's faith in God—that is, his belief that moral goodness is the law of the universe, which becomes faith in God upon reflection—is founded upon his appreciation of his father and mother. Fortunate indeed is that child whose parents, realizing their obligation to manifest God in their flesh to his dawning apprehension, discharge this function conscientiously. Conversely, I think it will be found that most atheists were condemned to doubt and pessimism in the homes of their childhood by discovering their parents in moral error —in lies, cruelty, or tyrannical selfishness.

After the home comes the school; teachers are then associated with parents as illustrations of moral goodness to the mind of the child. If it is the peculiar privilege of parents to embody goodness under its essential aspect of love, to teachers comes the weighty opportunity of incarnating it

under the forms of truth and justice in their relations to their pupils. Many a child whose domestic surroundings have hardly been conducive to confidence in the divinity of life, has to thank the faithful, firm, loyal and stimulating friendship of godly counselors in the school-room, uncompromisingly devoted to truth and uniformly equable in discipline, for the beginnings of a nobler and more inspiring outlook than his home imparted.

Then comes the turn of our friends, as representatives of God. Deep and lasting friendship usually flowers first in the years between childhood and manhood, when the youth is finding himself and defining his purposes in a freshly discovered world. Great are the perils of evil friendships at this time. But, on the other hand, inestimable are the services to character, at the same period, of friendship grounded in mutual respect and carried forward into those bonds of confidential intimacy which can only subsist among persons of the same generation. Many a boy has got his grip on righteousness as the ultimate law of being—that is, on faith in God—through contemplating with veiled and perhaps reluctant admiration the cheerful decency and robust idealism of a boon companion in the face of strong temptations candidly acknowledged and discussed.

Friendship finds its loftiest term in the marriage relation, which opens out, to youth emerging into maturity, new realms of loyalty, gentleness and delicacy, not dreamed of before. It is not by accident that many men come to religion through the influence of their wives, and that some women come to religion through the influence of their husbands; for to the hearts of average people no other chapter of experience so effectively illuminates the divine content and purport of experience as does the refining friendship of a congenial marriage.

But friendship also reaches out, as we come into the fullness of our powers, beyond the intimacies of youth and the sacred confidences of matrimony, to include many, stronger, wiser and better than ourselves, who generously interest themselves in our welfare, and in whom we first discern, it may be, the full proportions of human nobility. I have been privileged to count dozens of men and women, old and young, among my friends, any one of whom, presenting the silent argument of an august moral serenity for my appreciation, would suffice to convince me that to produce such integrity the universe itself must be divine, and that there must be immortality, since for such a life cessation is unthinkable.

Thus we see that the rudiments of religion are to be found in influences of moral goodness radi-

ating from benign personalities related to us in many different ways. We believe that life is good, despite its horrors and its griefs, because we are in touch with good lives. We believe in God, because we see Him revealed in human nature. Love is our first guide to faith; logic comes later.

Not only is this true of individuals, but a like principle holds for the race. Ethnologists tell us that group religion originated in reverence for the ancestors of the clan. All the great faiths of mankind trace back their history to some hero, in whom people of his time and place beheld their ideals personified. Many of these heroes, however, occupy ethical viewpoints which, though advanced for their day, seem now pitifully inept and inadequate. They were men of limited vision and circumscribed outlook, whose revelations, up to a certain point authentic, fall nevertheless below the level of the common understanding of spiritual values in our age. Two only of these hero-saints of the race stand out above the rest, and tower over the mists of their eras, by virtue of the universal cogency of their examples, the purity and persuasiveness of their precepts.

Of these two the first in point of time by some five centuries is Gautama, called the Buddha. If I did not know Christ, I should be a Buddhist, in sheer devout awe of that sublime leader, the first

great teacher of the brotherhood of man, whose posthumous influence is responsible for most of the benign elements in the culture of the Far East. But, alas, Buddha's moral teaching and his philosophy are not coherent with each other. What he signally but unconsciously illustrated in work and word—moral goodness as the principle of universal being—he deliberately denied in theory; for, in rebellious abhorrence of Hindu polytheism, Buddha was an atheist.

You and I, however, need not pause upon the memory of this disheartening self-contradiction. We know the second of these transcendent racial heroes. Jesus, called the Christ, transcends Gautama the Buddha by so far as Gautama transcends all lesser heroes of mankind. In Christ we find works more gracious and words more luminous than in Buddha or any other. And his philosophy confirms what his example as unmistakably declares: that the Heart of Being is good, and that therefore our attitude toward life is to be trustful; that his goodness is ever active for the advantage of men, and that we may be privileged to coöperate with the Heart of Being in accomplishing His aims for His creatures. For Christ tells us that God is our Father; that He seeks to reclaim us from misuse of the freedom He has given us, and shrinks from no sacrifice to that end, so that by no lesser symbol

than the cross of our Elder Brother could His redemptive love be adequately exemplified; that, having won our trust and allegiance, God will work for and with us now and evermore, for the perfecting of our own character, and that we may bring others also to share His bounties.

Thus "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" is the culmination of a series of manifestations of the Divine Being through human nature, to individuals and to the race; and the incarnation of God in our flesh is seen to be such a continuous process as we hoped to discover. That Christ is indeed the climactic expression of the deepest truth which men long to know is made clear by the attractiveness of his figure to hearts in every time and clime. The preaching of the gospel must ever center in the presentation of Christ; for it is not by syllogisms or benefactions, but only through entering with deep joy into fellowship with him, that men are led to accept his hopeful world-view and the noble ideals of thought and conduct inseparable from that view.

I sometimes fear that we modern Christians, especially of a liberal persuasion, are growing hypercritically skeptical of this universal appeal of our Savior. We search the Scriptures with a tired gaze of sophistication, to find and stress obscure sayings of the Master which might puzzle

prospective converts; and to deprecate the miraculous element in the narratives of his earthly career, as though its improbability stood out from the page, and might vitiate the other factors of his appeal. But men who come to the four Gospels with unjaded eyes do not commonly concern themselves, one way or the other, with the miracles, or with passages hard to fathom, or other details of little consequence. They are still struck, as men have always been upon meeting the Master in the Gospels for the first time, with one stupendous and compelling impression: the wonder of the divine goodness, the very heart of God revealed in the quality of Jesus' living. And naught else will ever win the world to ways of peace and righteousness, save the irresistible moral beauty of the God-Man, presented to all men as the center of their hopes, the object of their worship, and the companion of their toils.

An approach to the dogma of the Church as to the person of our Lord should always be made through a fresh appreciation of his human personality. The Church asserts that, though he died on Calvary, he now lives; that he has lived from all eternity with God the Father, and is of the same substance with Him; that he is omnipresent, as God is omnipresent; that we men may have the living Christ as our friend and comrade upon the rough road of this world if we will.

Tremendous assertions, these of the historic creeds! And I am prepared to grant that they can be neither logically demonstrated, nor clearly pictured forth in our minds. Nevertheless, I hold them true, for the reason that they are interpretations, at once gravely philosophical and splendidly poetic, of the actual experience of the faithful. The Christian heart knows that Christ still lives, and that he and God are in superlative degree, and consequently in a unique sense, one. There is that about our Lord's supreme manifestation of God's nature in our flesh, moreover, in contrast with all like manifestations in lesser degree throughout the continuous process of the incarnation, which we feel to be essentially timeless. As long as Christian souls sense this supremacy and its implications, the Christian formularies as to our Lord's nature, antique though their phraseology be, will ring true as glorious hymns of adoration to the only-begotten Son of God Most High.

Men come to believe in God, in the first instance, not through arguments about the First Cause, but because they feel that life is full of meaning, and that its meaning is harmonious with moral goodness. That feeling is begotten in child and man continuously throughout the period of our earthly sojourn by seeing God in other human beings; that is, by beholding good-

ness in ascendency over the lives of those whom we trust and revere. Faith on a racial scale has come about in the same way, through trust and reverence for mankind's heroes; and among mankind's heroes Christ is sovereign, so that in his face we see the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, and to him our faith ascribes no less a quality than very deity.

But in the lesser measure of our opportunities and qualifications, if this account of the incarnation be correct, we also are called upon to represent and embody divinity. There are people who are looking to each of us, hoping—unconsciously, perhaps—that in us they may see God. That is the function of influence: not only to affect the lives of others in immediate ways and to concrete ends, but also, and indeed chiefly, so to affect them that they shall feel, as it were intuitively, the goodness of all living, and by that sentiment shall be directed forward to knowledge of the living God. Immeasurable, then, is our opportunity through the influence of our characters; awful is our failure if our influence turn men away from God instead of drawing them toward Him.

No one of us can weigh the issue with which we are thus confronted without shuddering lest in some of his relations with his fellow-men he fail; without longing that in all his relations with

them he may let the light of God shine through his life upon God's children. To ensure ourselves against the failure we fear, and grow strong to exert the divine influence we would radiate, we must make Christ our friend, and walk with him. Christianity is a personal relation to a Person. Let us sustain and deepen that relation through the faithful exercise of our spiritual privileges in meditation and prayer, in order that the world may see the light of God's glory reflected in our faces.

VI

THE STILL SMALL VOICE

And he said, Go forth, and stand upon the mount before Jehovah. And, behold, Jehovah passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before Jehovah; but Jehovah was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but Jehovah was not in the earthquake: and after the earthquake a fire; but Jehovah was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice.

—I Kings 19:11, 12

Belief in God—in goodness as the conscious, that is the personal, principle of all being—is begotten in us by the influence of goodness in other personalities whom we love and revere. And this revelation, bespeaking faith, reaches its climax in Jesus Christ our Lord. But how do we recognize goodness when we see it? And how can we find God when we are alone, beyond the reach of human influence?

These questions are fundamental and urgent. For never do we need God more than while we are going through those desolate passages of earthly experience in which we realize how insuperable are the barriers which separate our souls from all others. Not only so, but we are alone, though with a less poignant sense of lone-

liness, even when we are surrounded by the most tender and sympathetic human associations. For we are alone when we think, when we come to conclusions, when we make decisions; since no one can think our thoughts for us, though others may comprehend our thoughts when we speak them forth.

A parable of the search for God in the depths of the heart of man is afforded us by the ancient wonder-story of Elijah on Mount Horeb. The sturdy old prophet, having set at naught wicked King Ahab, was in flight from Ahab's vengeful queen, and found himself in utter solitude, cut off from every terrestrial resource. But in the wilderness God ministered to him, and manifested himself in a way conveying the positive certainty of the divine presence to His servant. We can picture Elijah standing stalwart against the storm, feeling out after God, as the impressive pageantry of a tremendous hurricane played about him. But not in wind or quake or lightning did he find Him. These were but the panoplies of the divine majesty, which was itself made known to him in a still small voice, somehow audible above the turmoil. The phrase "still small voice" is a graphic description of the inner witness, the word of God in our very souls, whereby we are fortified against the tempests of this world, and led to discern a divine purpose

even when the skies above us are darkest. This graphic description has inspired a stanza of Whittier's loveliest sacred poem:

> Breathe through the heats of our desire
> Thy coolness and Thy balm;
> Let sense be dumb, let flesh retire;
> Speak through the earthquake, wind and fire,
> O still small voice of calm.

How do we recognize goodness when we see it? The fact is that we do recognize it. And we can only suppose that we do so because goodness corresponds to something deep in our own nature; that our souls are instruments sensitive to divine impressions; that God, whom we find in the character of good men, and above all in the holy love of Christ, has a mouthpiece in our own hearts, however weak and wayward we may be; so that, by hearkening, we may catch the accents of divine assurance within, even when we are alone.

We have not far to seek this mouthpiece. We call it conscience. Conscience is that sensitiveness in us to moral issues whereby we are irresistibly impelled to think in terms of right and wrong. The verdict of conscience, to be sure, is not the same for all persons in all periods; but, whatever the stage of their moral development be, whether they be relatively blind or relatively clairvoyant on these issues, the fact remains that

all men are at least conscious of the meaning of ethical distinctions. Again, some people have consciences so rudimentary through lack of training, or so blunted by disuse, that at most points they seem to be, not moral, nor immoral, but unmoral; nevertheless, at some point every man is morally sensitive, and attempts to interpret right and wrong in terms of expediency, of utility, of the fear of consequences on the one hand and the hope of them on the other, are fruitless. For every man knows that his conscience proceeds often in utter disregard of all considerations of his selfish advantage. So conscience must be explained as the receiving instrument in our minds for the messages of that goodness which is the conscious purpose of all being.

We hear many tones of God's voice in conscience. First, there is the tone of command. Some things we must do; other things we must not do. An inner compulsion comes upon a man, which he knows he will withstand at his peril. We have all been obliged at some time to go counter to our own desires in order to keep our self-respect. After one such experience no room is left for doubt as to the imperative quality of this subjective command. Now and then, of course, conscience bids us do what we want to do; but so infrequently that, as a general rule, we are suspicious of our own honesty when con-

science and desire seem to coincide. We know that we are on safe ground, however, when, at the behest of the still small voice, we say, "This is what I want to do; but I will not: that is what I do not want to do; but I will!"

But when we take the other line, and defy conscience, then we hear the voice of God within in tones of awful condemnation. I am disposed to hold that the lurid depictions of hell current in medieval theology, incredible in a literal sense, originated as accurate and arresting allegories of the torments which conscience inflicts upon the deliberate wrong-doer. I have been in hell; and so have you. Shakespeare's greatest tragedy shows us Macbeth and his wife in hell; the greatness of the tragedy consists in the universality of its appeal, since every one of us, alas, has undergone this dire adventure in some connection and degree. But the tragedy of the guilty conscience has an aspect of sublimity. For we should not know, and hate, and fear, and abhor our sins, if our souls were not sensitized to God's will by kinship with Him; or if God were not concerned for our souls, to bring us to a mood of penitence.

How do we come to that mood? As we grovel in the mire we hear the still small voice saying: "The past is over and done with; this is a new day; stand on your feet, and go forward!" A

morning dawns, for the man of courage who has sinned, when he says to himself (as we suppose, but in truth it is God who speaks to him): "I have indeed done wrong; I cannot undo it, and I will not deny it. But I will make such reparation for it as lies within my power, and will depart from it; and from this time on I will face toward the light!" Then there comes an ineffable sense of comfort, confidence and renewal. That is the voice of God in pardon; it heralds the beginning of a new life.

When we honestly weigh our own resources against the claims which conscience makes upon us, we cannot but be aware that we need strength beyond the common measure of our living in order to meet them. That strength comes to us when we lose ourselves in some outgoing devotion. When love comes to us—the type of love in which desire for possession is not dominant, but a passion of sacrifice—our feeble wills are re-enforced as by a miracle. The mother for her child, the follower for his trusted leader, the true Christian for his Savior, can overcome temptations otherwise irresistible, and accomplish more than reason could demand of flesh and blood. Of like sort is the enrichment of capacity which ensues when a man becomes a whole-hearted devotee of some great cause. Cowardice is vanquished, battle has no terror, for a soldier in

love with his imperiled country; the shadow of death holds no gloom for the experimental scientist who braves the menace of the direst plague in the hope that he may bring a specific against it back from the very verge of the grave for suffering humanity; apostles of the cross have in our time, as in centuries past, met torture and destruction with a smile for the Gospel's sake. Whence come these mighty affections and enthusiasms, dynamic to our wavering resolution? Whence, indeed, but from the spirit of God within us, breathing the power of His love into our wills?

There is another manifestation of the divine presence in our hearts which has meant a great deal to me; and I hope and believe that most of you have shared it. I mean the voice of God in guidance over perplexing paths and through situations from which no outcome is apparent to our vision. There are times when a fog of uncertainty closes us in, so that we cannot see even the next step before us; when we can hardly believe that we shall ever find our way again. But then, if only we stop straining our eyes, and give up trying to find our own way, and are content to wait for the inner monitor to direct our course —then such direction comes. Often only one step at a time in advance is made clear to us; we take that step, however, without anxiety as to what

may lie beyond it, and keep on repeating this sure though tedious process, until presently the fog lifts, the road lies straight before us, and in sunlight, or it may be by calculations upon a single star, but in either case with a new feeling of security and confidence, we go untroubled toward our goal.

If he who sets conscience at naught invites thereby the infernal wretchedness of guilt and shame, it is equally indubitable that he who, on the contrary, yields to conscience his trustful obedience, achieves heaven in his heart. For he knows that he has done right; and he knows that to do right is in itself and for its own sake better than any material reward. How does he know it? By an intuition producing in him, without his conscious participation, a calm like the serene equipoise of timeless being: God tells him; he has heard the still small voice in commendation and encouragement.

And, finally, and I think to most of us but very occasionally—perhaps not a dozen times in our lives—yet unmistakably, our inner being expands in some fleeting moment of immensely heightened sensibility to the dimensions of cosmic joy, and it is as though celestial choirs sustained the voice of God, rendering the occult harmonies of the universe in our souls. I am not thinking now of any technical or temperamental

appreciation of beauty, truth or goodness. I am thinking of an experience literally indescribable which may come to the man who has sincerely sought to live in conformity with the still small voice of moral discrimination and mandate in his own bosom. We plod through the years, sometimes befogged, and again with light overhead; sometimes uphill, and sometimes down; with a steady workaday peace of mind, it may be, but no mystic radiance. Then of a sudden we come to a place whence the world is seen transfigured: momentarily we "get the hang of things"—that colloquialism comes nearer to expressing this rare and exalted spiritual adventure than any choicer phrase I have heard. After such a moment—when we have felt the flow of infinite life through our veins, and ourselves in rapt attunement to universal purpose, and all things of time and space have been sacramental of supernal reality to our senses—we are prone to mourn the fading of the glory, and to wish that upon the place of transfiguration we might pitch our tents forever. But it would not be good for us or for the world that we should do so. There is time enough ahead, when our work is done here, for sustained cosmic consciousness. For the present it should and must suffice that we have hearkened to the full diapason of the divine tones at once; that we can never again doubt

Him whose voice has for a moment filled our souls, so that its echoes yet return when we wistfully invoke them.

Now in presenting these intimate aspects of the inner revelation of God I have not described my own experience, or yours, or even that of Christians in general, solely or chiefly. I have been speaking the language of all mankind. Conscience—its requirements, its censures, its grants of pardon to courageous penitence and of power for a new life, its approval, its guidance, and the ecstasies to which it sometimes leads—conscience, I say, in all these phases, is known in every land, by men of every creed. And, with whatever divergencies of detail in special traditions and environments, the grand lines of its injunctions and procedure are uniform. That is why we can claim that conscience is the voice of the God of all the earth. He who is habitually attentive to this voice will not fail, moreover, to divine the presence it attests in outer nature as well as in the soul of man. The conscious purpose of all being is, to be sure, as yet inarticulate in stellar and geologic processes, and at the lower levels of vital evolution; but that which arrives at expression in man, whose spiritual capacities constitute the crown of creation as we see it, must doubtless exist and press upward with its beneficent urge also beneath the

threshold of finite mind. So that the still small voice—the Holy Spirit of God, God Immanent—confirms the invitation of God revealed in character—God incarnate, God the Son—to faith in righteousness as the universal law, even though the outer order sometimes fails to make that law evident to our perceptions.

But, though men of all creeds have found God in conscience, yet it is only when spiritual aspiration is defined in terms of the character of Christ and quickened by faith in him that conscience, the inspirer of character, operates regularly and extensively in the many gracious ways which we have considered. The sense of pardon, for instance, has certainly come to some men who, knowing not Christ, yet sought God; but to very few of them. But pardon is a normal element of every Christian's experience; to this we all can bear witness. Thus the sacred influences of the Spirit are outpoured in special and abundant measure, as on the Apostolic Church at Pentecost, upon those whose concept of the Infinite Being conforms to the gracious lineaments of Jesus. As these sacred influences are potentially heightened, however, by Christian faith, so is deepened the responsibility of them that call Jesus Lord for cultivating the gifts of the Spirit. We are not exempted by the Savior's grace from hearkening to con-

science; we are the more obligated thereto, by virtue of the assurance we have that conscience is the very voice of God, the mouthpiece of His Spirit, and that God is love, so that His laws are not dictates of His arbitrary will, but are vouchsafed for our enlightenment on the path of peace and eternal fulfilment. It is for us, then, gratefully accepting this assurance, to hearken to the still small voice, and heed it; that our belief in God may be no mere article of an inert creed, but a vital energy shaping our natures in His likeness.

VII

THE HOLY TRINITY

. . . . Neither is there any other name under heaven, that is given among men, wherein we must be saved.

—Acts 4:12

The doctrine of the Holy Trinity has ever been regarded as fundamental to Christian theology. Yet nowhere in the New Testament is this doctrine explicitly stated. For the commission to the Apostles with which the first Gospel concludes, and which directs them to "make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit," is quite surely an addition to the original text. Nevertheless, this doctrine seems to me to be implicit in the teachings of our Lord himself, of the Apostles who had known him in the flesh, and of St. Paul. I trust that I am not unduly influenced by tradition; and, as I hope to make clear, I by no means regard acquaintance with, or acceptance of, this doctrine as essential to saving fellowship with God. Nevertheless, the more I reflect upon the subject, the more convinced I become that the

historic doctrine of the Trinity, fairly interpreted, is requisite to explain the general tenor and main emphases of Christian faith.

In default of an explicit statement of the doctrine of the Trinity in the New Testament, I have chosen as the text of this discussion an utterance of St. Peter, succinctly and emphatically enunciating that profound conviction which was the primary motive of later theologians in formulating the trinitarian definition of the Divine Being; namely, the confident and enthusiastic assurance that Jesus was one with God. The Apostles, of whom St. Peter was for the moment the leader, had long walked and talked with the Prophet of Nazareth. And the net result of that regenerating intimacy was that, with love and wondering awe, they felt that they had to acclaim him as the supreme manifestation of God, a manifestation the degree of which was so superlative that it amounted to a qualitative difference from all lesser revelations of God through the character of righteous men, and certified to their hearts that Jesus was, in a unique sense, the very Son of God, so that they deemed themselves justified in asserting his celestial pre-existence, and the identity of his nature with that of the Creator of all things and Father of all mankind. These are tremendous conclusions; but their major

premise is a transcendent devotion which admits no doubt of its own clairvoyance in regard to its object. So fundamental is this personal attitude toward Jesus to the understanding of Christian truth that it would no doubt be hopeless to attempt to persuade any one who does not share it of the validity of the doctrine of the Trinity. But, conversely, no one who does share this attitude will fail to arrive at this doctrine if he follow through a course of sound reasoning from this starting-point.

When St. Peter uttered before the high priest of the Jews his defiant and uncompromising assertion of the supremacy of Jesus, his identity with God the Savior, he was speaking in the power of the Holy Spirit, that is, under the influence of that marvelous sharpening of moral discernment and that quickening of spiritual capacities which came upon the first believers on the day of Pentecost. And in this influence St. Peter and his associates recognized the same power which they had beheld displayed in their Master. Between him and this inner dynamic of triumphant living they could draw no distinction, nor did they seek to do so; instead, they described this Spirit which abode in them as the Spirit of Christ, or as the Spirit of God, indifferently. Because some such heightening of religious experience, productive of moral reno-

vation, has always characterized the approach of men through Christ to the Eternal, to the Holy Spirit as well as to Christ the faith of the Church ascribes equal rank in the Godhead with God the Father.

One phase of St. Peter's confession is obscure to our understanding at first thought, because of a change in the connotation of one of its terms. A name is just a name to us; so we cannot easily comprehend what salvation in or by a name may mean, unless indeed some magical incantation. Hence we are disposed to suspect that salvation by a name can be only nominal salvation. But throughout the Old and New Testaments the word "name" is used in connection with the Object of worship as a symbol of His power. To explain how this came about, and to illustrate the prevalence of this idea among all early peoples as well as in Israel, would not be difficult, but would take more time than is now at our disposal. So I ask you simply to accept my explanation that "name" is here the synonym of "power." Reading the text in this sense, we see at once that what St. Peter is asserting is that Christ is in fact, whether so acknowledged by all or not, one with the power of salvation, wherever and however that power may be manifested on earth.

A further point requires clarification in con-

nection with this identification of the "name," or power, of Christ with that divine energy which effects salvation. This has commonly been supposed to mean that unless a man specifically invoked the name of Christ, or availed himself of Christ's power with full recognition of its source, he could not be saved. This harsh and repellent interpretation is embodied in the eighteenth of the Articles of Religion of the Church of England:

"They also are to be had accursed that presume to say, That every man shall be saved by the Law or Sect which he professeth, so that he be diligent to frame his life according to that Law, and the Light of Nature. For Holy Scripture doth set out to us only the Name of Jesus Christ, whereby men must be saved."

But that is in effect to maintain that St. Peter was implying the alienation, presumably perpetual, of all souls from God, save only the handful of the Nazarene's disciples, whom he represented. Any such notion of his intention is obviously preposterous. There have, to be sure, been not a few who in the name of Christ have sought to arrogate to themselves some such monopoly of saving grace. But surely St. Peter himself cannot have propounded so bigoted a pretension. For he had walked with Jesus; and Jesus was of all men the most broad-

minded and tolerant, in matters affecting mere opinion and theological definition. It is not only a misinterpretation, it is a revoltingly irreverent parody of Jesus' attitude toward his fellow-men to suppose that he, or any man who had come under his influence, could advance any such narrow claim, belying the wideness of God's mercy. St. Peter did not mean that no man could find salvation without acknowledging Christ; he meant that whenever a man found salvation, that came about, whether he knew it or not, by the effective operation of the power of Christ, who is one with God.

Now let us get the doctrine of the Trinity definitely before us. It is briefly yet compendiously set forth in the first of the Articles of Religion of the Church of England:

"There is but one living and true God, everlasting, without body, parts or passions; of infinite power, wisdom and goodness; the Maker, and Preserver of all things both visible and invisible. And in unity of this Godhead there be three Persons, of one substance, power, and eternity; the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost."

How can there be three Persons in one God? Here again the argument turns upon an ambiguous word. We use the word "person" to designate a distinct individual, an isolated cen-

ter of consciousness. It is capable of demonstration that this modern concept of a "person" owes its origination to the Christian religion. Those eccentrics of our day who advance extravagant claims in behalf of the rights of personality to self-expression are unwittingly stating, in a perverse and inverted way, one result of Christ's emancipation of the human soul. Nevertheless, the word "person" conveyed no such meaning to any one when it was introduced into theology to designate the inner constitution of God; the idea itself was as yet hardly clear, and this was not the term employed to designate it. When we hear of three Persons in one God, therefore, we are not to understand thereby three people, as it were, joined in one by some inconceivable abnormality.

Not only has much criticism of the doctrine of the Trinity been grounded in this misconception, but, thanks to it, some meanings have been read into the doctrine by believers which approach the ludicrous. One recent instance of this is the view popular among enthusiasts for the "social gospel," that the Godhead itself presents the prototype of social relations, as though Father, Son and Holy Ghost made up a household; or, perhaps, an excessively exclusive club. All such grotesque misrepresentations would be done away with if their devotees would but con-

sider the history of the word "person," and note the point in that history at which the definition of the Holy Trinity was formulated.

But, if "three persons" does not mean three different "people," what are we to understand by the term? First, three manifestations of the Supreme Power of the Universe—of that goodness which by Christians is held to be the conscious purpose of all being: in human character, objectively viewed; in conscience; and in the outer order, or nature. Second, corresponding to these temporal manifestations, such an intrinsic constitution or economy of the Divine Being that God is eternally expressing Himself in creation; eternally putting His heart into His work; and eternally indwelling the whole process of becoming, so that every natural force is to be viewed as a manifestation upon its own plane of that divine energy which becomes articulate in the human conscience. And, however apprehended, whether as transcendent or as immanent or as incarnate, it is ever God, and the same God, whom we find when we follow the avenues of life far enough to penetrate to ultimate values.

I am aware that this explanation is at once so inadequate as to satisfy no systematic thinker, and so complex as to bewilder others. But we shall see that it suffices, at least, for our purpose,

by virtue of the practical meanings which it suggests. It is because of these practical meanings, I believe, rather than from any love of abstruse speculation, that the doctrine of the Trinity will continue to hold its high place in Christian thought.

These practical meanings are derived from a parallelism of the Holy Trinity with the tripartite constitution of human personality—a parallelism which would be so startling if it were a mere coincidence that it affords in itself an argument in support of the trinitarian view, as required by our religious needs, in that it attributes to the Supreme Being a full correspondence with the nature of His earthly children. For God the Creator corresponds to man active, to the will, which is the spring of our actions; God Incarnate corresponds to man's emotional nature, since it is by love that we recognize Him; God Immanent corresponds to the human intellect, since He is the Spirit of Truth, and Truth can only be recognized by man through exercise in various connections of that inner discrimination which at the level of moral decisions we recognize clearly as the still small voice of God.

Regarded in this light, the doctrine of the Trinity, so far from closing all doors of salvation to men save only the august and often inacces-

sible portal of an exactly accurate belief, throws open all the doors there are in man's nature, corresponding to the divine constitution, and would persuade us that whenever a man achieves righteousness we are to recognize God as his coadjutor in that high emprise.

For righteousness is salvation. That is only a working equation, to be sure, an approximation, like 3.14159 as the numerical equivalent of π; but like that number, it is exact enough to work for our purposes. For righteousness is the only available satisfactory demonstration of deliverance from evil into harmony with God. There was little or no other-wordly emphasis in the teaching of Jesus; so he and his followers were certainly not thinking chiefly of the future life when they spoke of salvation. Jesus believed so positively in the future life that apparently he felt no need of dogmatizing about it, or of making specific preparation for it. Instead, it was his habit to commend those men, whatever their creed, in whom he beheld moral worth, and to treat them as his friends. No one who studies the Master's life with an open mind can doubt but that he believed, as we also do instinctively, that if a man lives aright in this life, he need have no fears for the life to come. But it is only by the power of God, whether he recognize it or not, that any

man can live aright in this life. So when we see a man so living—that is, not sinlessly, of course, but so that the dominant tone of his thought and action is in harmony with conscience—we, who understand how these things come about, are to praise God for helping him, and to praise him for helping God.

How do men seek righteousness? One way is by the direct approach to morality; that is, by striving to live in accordance with the dictates of conscience, recognized as the ultimate authority, with little if any further theorizing about its origin or basis. This is the way of the moralist. Many a moralist in our time follows this way with no definite belief at all beyond this acceptance of the supreme claim of his own highest ideal upon his energies. Occasionally he even calls himself an atheist; more often, an agnostic. But no one who knows such moralists can deny that some of them achieve a height of personal integrity—not merely of the cold, austere and negative virtue of self-control, but of gracious, generous, ardent, sacrificial service of their fellow-men—which puts many who accept the orthodox creeds to shame. What shall we say, then, of such a man? That he has achieved or is achieving salvation. That he is working in harmony with God the Creator, who participates inevitably in all constructive efforts throughout

His creation; that he is approaching God through the resolute benevolence of his activities in accord with the divine Will, and is therefore destined, some day, here or hereafter, to rejoice in the discovery of the principle which now he blindly obeys. If we would win him to Christian faith, it is not in order that he may get to heaven, but in order that he may be a happier man on the way!

Another way whereby men effect right relations with the universe—which is equivalent to qualifying as acceptable servants of God, whether they know it or not—is through single-minded search for truth. That holds even though they have the misfortune to fall into error. For the scientist, proceeding cautiously toward conclusions which he may legitimately hold to be verified; the philosopher, analyzing concepts and combining ideas as the scientist analyzes things and combines elements, with an abhorrence for guesswork and prejudice—these men must and do bring their passions under the mastery of their stern ideals of unsullied veracity; while the service they thus render to truth clarifies human thinking and accelerates racial progress. Such men are often disaffected toward religion, or at least something less than wholehearted in endorsement of its doctrines; for the criteria of truth to which they are re-

stricted within the regions of their several studies —in empirical data, and generalizations based thereon—do not suffice at the deeper level of religious certainty, and they are familiar with no others. Nevertheless in fact, though not to their own knowledge, scientists and philosophers are eminently religious men. For to them mankind is indebted not only for material gains but also in large measure for spiritual emancipation; and these are works of righteousness. Measured by the results they have obtained thus far, not to mention the promises their labors hold out for the future, these men have achieved harmony with God—salvation—and they have done it by way of that discernment of and love for truth which to the believer in the triune God betokens the operation of the Holy Spirit within the breasts of men.

Of course, the way wherein most men seek salvation—the simple and obvious way in which to pursue and apprehend the ideals of righteousness, which are the indices of salvation in this world—is the path of religious faith, which is primarily a state of feeling. Faith finds its most glorious object, for God finds His consummate revelation, in our Lord Jesus Christ. But sometimes men have found righteousness through devotion to lesser manifestations of the divine nature in human character. There have been

saints in the following of Buddha, of Mohammed, and of many another minor spokesman of the Eternal. Shall we deny their sanctity because they knew not Christ? We cannot do that; for Christ obliges us, above all things, to be honest. What, then, shall we say? Why, that God incarnate in any life better than our own for our guidance, is Christ incarnate, since Christ is one with God; so men who know not Jesus can come to God through the Christ-principle exemplified in Buddha and the rest.

Thus I have tried to show that the doctrine of the Holy Trinity assures us of correspondence in the Godhead with our own nature, compounded of will, intelligence and feeling; so that, in the light of this doctrine, fairly interpreted, we cannot fail to recognize the divine power operative wherever its fruits are discernible in human life in righteousness, whether that righteousness be sought as the moralist seeks it, or as the scientist and philosopher seek it, or as the religionist, of whatever creed, seeks it. But what, one may ask, is then the advantage of accepting the Christian Gospel, if the power of God unto salvation manifests itself also where that Gospel is not accepted or understood? The same advantage as pertains to the comprehension of any dependable principle or law. When one knows the law, one can fulfill its require-

ments more easily by far, and guard against infringements of it more adequately, than when the law is not understood. Instead of having to work along from day to day by the costly method of trial and error, one can then go forward steadily, with economy of effort and a maximum result, toward the goal pursued.

An interesting analogy occurs in medical practice. Elementary decency prompts cleanliness in the care of the afflicted; and cleanliness is the sum and substance of antisepsis. So, many surgical operations were performed without subsequent infection before the nineteenth century. But more often—with ghastly frequency, indeed—fatal infections did ensue, because the principle of antisepsis was not understood, and consequently was not rigorously applied. After Lister and Pasteur had set that principle in a clear light, however, the results of surgery were amazingly enhanced because at length properly safeguarded. In the same way, true righteousness—salvation—is often attained without knowledge of its principle; but, alas, how seldom, in comparison with the results achieved through the Gospel, which sets that principle in a clear light.

He only will think that Christianity is cheapened by this frank recognition of salvation where the Gospel is not known, who fails to

grasp the importance of scientific procedure in comparison with haphazard effort, throughout the broad field of human endeavor. In the field of endeavor for righteousness—that is, salvation—our advance is immeasurably facilitated and hastened by that understanding of spiritual processes which the Gospel communicates.

But this advantage involves a commensurate responsibility. Lamentable indeed will our case be if, accepting the doctrine of the Holy Trinity and comprehending its implications as to the avenues through which God works and is to be approached, we fail to open our lives to His operation and to seek Him in all the ways in which He is accessible. Re-dedicating our lives, then, to the realization of the moral ideal, as its plenitude is manifest in Christ Jesus, let us rejoice in our reassuring and invigorating knowledge of the divine nature; yet with trembling lest, if in passion or indolence we turn back, we incur the guilt of having neglected that principle, the triune nature of the divine omnipresence, which opens up a broad and firm highway of salvation before the Christian.

VIII

LIGHT FROM THE SCRIPTURES

Ye search the Scriptures, because ye think that in them ye have eternal life; and these are they which bear witness of me. —St. John 5:39

In this passage Jesus was not only or primarily commending the Scriptures. He took for granted agreement as to their supreme value. He was criticizing his critics for the way in which they approached the Scriptures, the expectation they entertained in searching them. And this criticism of their attitude toward the holy writings of Israel was in effect an indictment of the very character of these opponents of the Gospel. For, if they had been men of the right sort, they would not have studied the Scriptures in the wrong spirit.

If these critics of Jesus had been spiritually minded, they would have gone to the Scriptures looking for ideals. For it is by ideals that the spiritually minded live. And they would have found in the Old Testament two ideals standing out in clear and majestic relief against much in the religion of the chosen people which was

merely a parallel to that of other peoples. They would have found the ideal of holiness, and that of sacrificial love—the two main themes of the prophets, the distinctive religious teachers of Jewry. Discovering and apprehending these ideals as a peculiar heritage of their faith, they could not but have recognized in Jesus the radiant and sublime fulfilment of them both, so that, instead of opposing our Lord's claims upon the allegiance of their hearts, they would have yielded gladly to him, and followed him in the way of life more abundant.

But these critics, like many other people who profess religion while missing its meaning, were materially minded. They were concerned with outward things rather than with inward states. So what they looked for in the Scriptures was a law of conduct, by following which they might be assured of special privileges at the hands of the Almighty; and a hope for their race, of attaining dominion by force over other races. They had lost sight of religious idealism in concentration upon a complex and mechanical legalism. Instead of love, they cherished hatred toward the non-Jewish world, with a sinister hope that they might some day by a miracle be so exalted in power as to be able to vent this hatred with impunity in cruel oppressions of Israel's erstwhile conquerors. In searching the

Scriptures they gave their attention almost exclusively to the statutes therein contained, not markedly different from the legal enactments of other religions; and to the apocalyptic strain which developed late in Hebrew history as a protest, in a spirit of desperate and insane bravado, against the merited misfortunes to which Israel and Judah successively had fallen prey. They passed over lightly and without discernment the prophetic insistence upon righteousness of the heart, because it gainsaid these other emphases which they preferred. And so, because Jesus stressed righteousness more than regulations, and could not and would not offer them military leadership for the conquest of the world, they scorned and condemned him in whom the authentic hope of Israel, as well as the very nature of the one true God, was incarnate.

A similar contrast is to be observed in the way in which men today approach the sacred writings of our faith, in their completed form, with the New Testament added to the Old. All Christians believe that a divine light shines from the Scriptures. But the light we look for may be for either of two uses: outlook, or insight. If we go to the Bible seeking outlook upon mere facts otherwise ascertainable through diligent research, we are doomed to a certain degree at

least of disappointment. For, though the Bible is doubtless more often right than not in its statements of fact, it is not by any means always so. The materially minded Christian turns to the Scriptures as to a final authority upon certain chapters of history and certain aspects of science. When men investigate these chapters and these aspects through other sources independently of the Bible, they discover that many Biblical statements cannot be verified, while some are irreconcilably contradicted by the conclusions of dispassionate and exact investigation. Now a Christian who holds as an indispensable element of faith that the Scriptures are inerrant in all statements of fact, must, if he would keep his faith, deliberately reject the verdict of his senses in order to cling to the outlook which the Bible affords him upon these controverted matters. So he will come to believe that the dispassionate investigator is a godless man, with an animus against religion; he will refuse to familiarize himself with the results of such investigation, lest his mind be tainted by this appalling impiety; and he will cling with sullen, truth-defying stubbornness to the more extreme forms of the theology of the sixteenth century, even more distant from the spirit of Jesus in the first century than from the findings of science in the nineteenth and twentieth.

With such an outlook, a man can hardly live at peace with his more candid neighbors, but in the name of the Prince of Peace will inevitably find himself obliged to engage in endless embittered controversies. And I have known Christians of this sort whose minds were so twisted by accommodation to their irrational position that they were guilty of actual dishonesty and falsehood in argument, wilfully misstating known truths and misquoting their adversaries in lamentably mistaken championship of the God of Truth.

Suppose, however, that a man who goes to the Bible for outlook upon external facts, and who discovers that in this regard the Bible is not infallible, prefers—as it would seem that any honest man must prefer—the facts ascertained by research to the Scriptural allegations which research has disproved. He will then be prompted to discard the Bible entirely; to repudiate religion as an hallucination; and to become a propagandist against the spiritual interpretation of life, thus identified in his mind with exploded errors, in behalf of a cold, hard materialism. That is how many atheists are made.

But obviously an approach to the Bible which, if consistently followed, will turn truth-seekers either into theological reactionaries or into enemies of religion, can hardly satisfy a man

who believes in estimating statements of fact by factual standards; but who nevertheless cannot escape the conviction that in the Scriptures there are elements of inestimable value having nothing whatever to do with historical narratives or scientific theories. So he will look for an alternative. And he will find it, as Jesus found it, in searching the Scriptures for insight into the deep meanings of human life, rather than for outlook upon its incidents and details. When one turns to the Bible for insight, one finds that it gives the light we seek; that it dispels the darkness of our souls as no other book can do.

The first element of this insight which the Bible imparts to us is as to the moral experience of man himself. In the Bible we find, as nowhere else that I know of, the terrible and glorious struggle of right against wrong in the human breast presented over and over again with compelling force and in imposing grandeur. Here we do not find, as for instance in the Greek dramatists, man represented as a mere plaything of blind necessity, or of capricious gods; righteousness as a mere outward conformity to the arbitrary decrees of heaven; sin as a mere accidental or unwitting or ironically necessitated departure therefrom. We find man shown to be free, to choose between good and ill; good an

eternal principle, not alien to but identical with the genuine interest of man as a spiritual being; righteousness defined in terms, not of conduct but of the intention behind conduct; sin a dreadful and tragic departure from the integrity of one's very self, a step toward spiritual suicide. To know the mighty men of the Scriptures so well as to enter into the tension of their tremendous moral combats and the elation of their superb moral victories, is to achieve a discernment of the import of conscience in our own lives so clear that in this light we can never again court remorse by living carelessly, but must seek peace through obedience to the imperative of righteousness in our own bosoms.

Second, we find in the Bible insight upon the relations of men with the Eternal. For we watch the knights of God in the Scriptures, not only fighting evil, but also at prayer, seeking and finding their King. We learn that their victories over sin were in their own thought inseparable from the strength which they derived from this divine communion. If prayer for us has meant chiefly a mechanical recitation of selfish demands in phrases consecrated by long, thoughtless usage; or if, in loose and superficial thinking about its significance, we have imagined prayer to be just a man talking to himself about his own aims and desires, from these flippant

and degrading misconceptions we are delivered into a due sense of the reality and glorious opportunity of true fellowship with Him who presides over the stars and our destinies, through acquaintance with the effective prayer-life of the heroes of the Bible, and especially of the central and climactic figure of them all, our Lord Jesus Christ.

Third, the Bible gives us insight as to the character of God Himself. It does not merely declare as a metaphysical proposition that God is; it shows us the very being of God, as he revealed Himself more and more distinctly to successive generations of His faithful followers, until at length He translated Himself into the vocabulary of human living by taking our flesh in the Son of Mary. The figure of God is a growing, changing figure in the Bible. At first there was only a remote, veiled Presence, so dimly discerned that men imagined all sorts of strange and awful things about Him. But, through the centuries of Israel's development, the mists were ever clearing and lifting, so that God in Christ impresses us quite otherwise than does the God of wrath with whom Moses communed. Yet we feel that the two are indeed one; and that in the Scriptures we have discovered, not merely a theory, but the record of a progressive experience which, in the ways the Bible indicates,

can and must be brought to pass in our own hearts.

The Bible is not, nor does it purport to be, a source of precise matter-of-fact outlook upon this passing world of shadows, its origin, and the succession of its major events. To go to the Bible with that notion of its light is to give evidence that one is materially minded, unawakened to the deeper issues of life. The Bible gives us, not outlook, but insight: insight into the meaning of man's moral vicissitudes, the nature of man's spiritual opportunity, and the character of God. But, in thus absolving the Bible from responsibility for uninterrupted historical and scientific veracity, what shall we do with the traditional conviction of the Church that the Scriptures are inspired? Does not inspiration preclude error at any point, even of minor detail?

The answer to that question depends upon what one understands by inspiration. If one supposes that God inspired the writers of this book in such a fashion that every word therein is God's word, then one has specified not inspiration, but dictation; the writers of this book must have been, not seers, but stenographers. That God might have chosen this way of making His truth known can hardly be doubted. But, if He had done so, the resultant compilation from many

pens in many centuries would be remarkable for two peculiarities of composition. First, the style throughout would be approximately uniform; that is, it would vary only within the range of one mind, with minor differences as different matters are discussed, but with major consistency of vocabulary and construction as well as of thought. Second, there would still be errors in the text—unless indeed the fingers of God's amanuenses were miraculously controlled while they transcribed the dictation of the divine voice; for no stenographer has yet lived who never misspelt a word, or in place of the right word wrote a wrong word which sounded like it. But the resultant textual inaccuracies would be of a mechanical sort, not making sense. But neither of these peculiarities is to be found in the Scriptures. Though the general quality of their spiritual experience is the same, these writers are sometimes as far apart as the poles, not only in construction and vocabulary, but also upon some points of doctrine: witness St. Paul and St. James on the relative importance of faith and works. And the occasional errors as to matters of fact in their compositions do make sense, though they make the wrong sense. So, on internal evidence, we cannot accept that view of inspiration which identifies it with divine dictation of these writings.

Our only remaining resource is to interpret the inspiration of the Bible in accordance with the usual meaning of the term as applied to artistic productions in other fields. If you have ever practised the art of letters, or any other of the fine arts, you know the difference between performing in a dull routine manner and performing in such a way as actually to surprise yourself by the felicity of every stroke. In this latter mood, carried to a higher degree than you and I have probably experienced it, is found what all are agreed in every other context save that of religion to regard as inspiration. Nor do I doubt that the artist who feels himself under an influence higher than his own consciousness is quite correct in that conviction, and ought to be moved by it to offer adoring gratitude to the Most High. I am confident that the Spirit of God is the spirit of beauty as well as of truth and of goodness; and that in certain creative moments all sincere workers are possessed of the Spirit of God, who brings out of the depths of their own experience, from hidden recesses which they have forgotten, resources and capabilities transforming their product out of something dull and prosaic into a creation of celestial radiance and loveliness. But it is always out of the artist's own experience that this beneficent Spirit brings these materials. In other words,

a man writes or paints or carves in such a way as to quicken spiritual insight in others only when he has worked under the guidance of the Spirit of God, which gives him insight into the depths of his own being, where his soul is at one with the Eternal. So in the Bible I find writings of men who, knowing God in their own souls and dedicating their pens to His service, were used of God that through their pens the vital element of their own deepest experience should be inspiringly offered to other seekers after Him. And that is true inspiration.

Shall we, then, say that the Scriptures are just like any other writings by authors who felt themselves inspired, and who inspire us? Yes, if we want to put it that way, so far as the quality of their inspiration is concerned. I believe that inspiration still occurs, in precisely the same way as it did for these ancient seers, in our time. Christlike character did not cease upon the earth when the Apostolic generation passed away to heaven; we do not think it unorthodox to expect Christlike characters in the twentieth century, nor impious, but just and proper, to acknowledge them when we do find them. In the same way, why should not God, who still reveals Himself to the hearts of His servants and through their characters to others, continue to

inspire men's words so that their words shall inspire others?

But a difference in degree, though not in quality, of inspiration there is, incalculably to the Bible's advantage. Though there are Christ-like men and women in the twentieth century, they would be the first to acknowledge that supreme spiritual achievement rests with the Apostolic church. Just so, though there are inspired writers in the twentieth century, yet the quintessence of divine inspiration, concentrated at a moment of unique opportunity in the world's history for the proclamation of the divine order, is to be found still, and I doubt not always will be recognized, in the Holy Scriptures of our faith. So manifestly and compellingly is this true that the Bible is, and will continue to be, prized by all who have familiarized themselves with it, as the indispensable manual of godly living. It was written by men like us out of their own experience; for it is always through men that God speaks to men; that truth is illustrated by the Incarnation, as well as by the inspiration of the Scriptures. But the men who wrote the Bible were the supreme discoverers of spiritual truth; the value of their teachings, therefore, can never be superseded. In their way we must walk, if we would also know God; and

we can only walk in their way by studying their words, to know what that way is.

The Bible is not a book of outlook but of insight. If Jesus' critics in his time had but realized that fact, had they been spiritually minded instead of materially minded, they would have recognized in Jesus the great Scriptural ideals of holiness and sacrificial love which were the principles of his living, and so would have claimed him as their Lord instead of rejecting him, to his and their own bitter woe. If we will go to the Bible looking for light on the deep meaning of human experience, we shall find what we seek; and in that discovery we shall know God for ourselves. With this understanding of the Bible's aim and ministry, we of the twentieth century must remain devout and earnest students of these holy teachings; for only by loyalty to the Bible can we hold ourselves true to that way of living, with God and for our fellow-men, in which is the secret of immortal blessedness.

IX

THE RELIGION OF JESUS

We preach Christ crucified.—I Corinthians 1:23

As every student of comparative religion knows, the attempt to define "religion" baffles while it attracts every writer on the subject. But there is value in the attempt to define such a great term as this, even though it be unsuccessful; at least it clarifies our thinking to cogitate on the complexities involved. To define Christianity is not easier than to define religion. But we may derive benefit from approaching a definition of Christianity by seeking to identify, among the diverse elements of our faith and its expression, the nucleus of all its elements and emphases. For, however widely we may differ as to details of Christian creed and program, we shall be one at heart, if only we can agree as to what the heart of our religion is.

It is often said that "Christians are the people of the Book": that the Bible is the center of Christianity. There is assuredly much to justify this declaration. The Bible does occupy an impregnable position. It deserves to be revered,

and, moreover, to be studied. For it is the source-literature of that great historic process in which all Christian belief is rooted: the growth of a unique God-consciousness in Israel, through the Prophets, whose order reached its climax in the Prophet of Nazareth. If it were not for the Bible, we should not know God through the Prophets and Christ. A generation of Christians unacquainted with the Scriptures would soon cease to be Christian.

Nevertheless, Christianity is not a religion of a book. For books at their best are not in themselves vital, but only vehicles of vitality from the soul of the writer to the soul of the reader. A literary religion would be more literary than religious—as indeed Christianity, when its leaders have been obsessed with the centrality of the Bible, has sometimes seemed. Moreover, the Bible does not justify such extravagant claims as are made for it by those who see in it the nucleus of Christian faith. There can be no true respect without honesty. So we must honestly admit that the Bible is not one book but many books, by no means always in agreement of fact and theory among themselves, and of many grades of literary, historic and philosophical value. This book or library is, furthermore, so ancient that with many problems of the modern world it makes no direct contact. The

endeavor to vindicate for the Bible a position of supremacy in the thinking of all the faithful has led to a fallacious and depressing reactionism, pernicious to the authentic interests of the spiritual life. Perhaps, indeed, while studying the Bible with more attentive appreciation than ever before because of the heightened awareness of the modern mind of the debt of the present to the great achievements of the past, we would do well to forget the very terms "revelation" and "inspiration," because of their conventional connotation of all-sufficing inerrancy, as applied to the Holy Scriptures, and subject these writings without reserve to the canons of criticism applied to all other works of literature.

Again, it is sometimes said, and still more often strongly implied, that Christianity is the religion of the Church. In this declaration a note is sounded more distinctive of Christian practice than the assertion that Christianity is the religion of a book. For other religions have other books, the source-literature of their several world-views; but, so far as I know, no other religion has ever attached so much importance as ours does to the organization of a communal life of faith. In the Church, people of both sexes and all ages find an extension of the family tie, a domestic intimacy of religious fellowship, which stands alone among the institutions of

world-religion—an unparalleled achievement of Christian strategy—singularly favorable to the heightening of religious experience, the strengthening of moral principle, the upbuilding of righteousness in the community, and the propagation of the faith.

Yet the Church is assuredly not the central point of Christianity. A man can be a Christian without the Church; though in the Church he will usually be a better Christian. What gives the Church its distinction is a stronger and more intimate factor of our faith than any mere human association, indwelling the Church. When that factor is absent or in partial eclipse, and the Church is regarded as existing in and for itself, all manner of defects present themselves, inviting the ruin of the Christian cause. For the Church is made up of fallible men and women. It can sometimes be, and has frequently been, manipulated to subserve the selfish ends of wealth, caste and oppression. Moreover, there is a tendency to self-absorption and smugness in the life of each separate Christian community, which promotes in its adherents the vice of arrogant and bitter hostility to all religious opinions and practices differing from its own.

Against the notion that the Church is the center of Christianity, Protestantism was in its origin a necessary and heroic protest. Similar

protests against an ecclesiastical bigotry in Protestantism, like that against which in the Mother Church Luther led the mighty revolt of the sixteenth century, have resulted in the multiplication of the divisions of the Christian Church, until it seems as though the seamless robe were rent beyond restitution. Yet perhaps this divided state of Christendom is not altogether to be regretted. Perhaps organic unity, for which some of our co-religionists impatiently clamor, would, at the same time that it promoted efficiency, injure Christianity itself, and cheat its adherents of the fullness of faith, by bolstering up the theory that it is the Church that counts: that God is concerned first of all, in this world, for the Church, and that therefore to the Church each Christian should give his supreme loyalty.

In contrast with these views, that the Bible is the center of Christian faith, and that the Church occupies that position, it is surely just to cite as a corrective the unanimous witness of the first Christians, as that witness recurs throughout the early Christian records, and is succinctly stated by St. Paul in our text.

In St. Paul's day, no man could make the mistake of ascribing to the Bible first place; for the Bible did not yet exist. There was, to be sure, the Old Testament. But its canon was not

to be determined until the last decade of the first century, and then by a council, not of Christian ministers, but of Jewish rabbis! In interpreting the Old Testament scriptures, moreover, Jesus had set his disciples an example of freedom which they followed to such lengths that we are unable to find any ground, other than their own unbridled fancy, for their exegesis of some Old Testament passages. And of course there was as yet no New Testament. Its sections were just being composed. No one knows when the work was completed; but it cannot have been until long after the Church had begun to function vigorously.

Nor could any Christian in that day suppose that the Church occupied the place of honor. For the Church was in an inchoate state, with no standards of official authority, with almost as many types of organization as there were individual congregations, and with no administrative tie binding them in unity save their common personal relations with the Apostles and other itinerant evangelists.

So the inescapable logic of historic circumstance preserved the early Christians from these errors of bibliolatry and of ecclesiasticism. They were not even tempted to assign first place to any other element of Christianity than Christ himself—for its testimony to whom, we cherish

the Bible; for its service to whom, we honor the Church: "We preach Christ crucified."

Sometimes Christ crucified has been preached in such a way as to lose sight of the man Jesus. It was a one-sided stress upon Christ the King and Judge, the eternal Second Person in the Holy Trinity, in almost entire disregard of his earthly life, and with a scrupulous preference for texts from the Old Testament, the later epistles, and the Apocalypse, to the neglect of the four Gospels, which occasioned the Unitarian movement, with its strenuous and equally one-sided insistence upon the genuine humanity of Jesus Christ. But no such extravagant emphasis upon their Lord's deity was likely to occur among the early Christians. When they acknowledged Christ as Eternal King, it was because of what they knew about Christ Jesus, the man in God's likeness. Even St. Paul, who had not known Jesus in the flesh, was much guided in his Christological speculations by his thorough familiarity with the reports of eyewitnesses of Christ incarnate. Therefore we are safe in asserting that to the first generation of the faithful Christianity was, and so to all subsequent generations it should be, the religion of a man.

Now that opens at once new perspectives of interest and attractiveness in the Christian faith.

For if men are to make up their minds about Christianity in response to the query, "What think ye of the Bible?" they must test the Bible by literary and historical standards, and will often find it wanting. If the query is to be, instead, "What think ye of the Church?" their judgment may reasonably be more emphatically one of disapprobation than in the previous instance. But when Christianity is identified with the life, example and spirit of a man—when the query becomes, "What think ye of Christ?"—then their interest will be more acute and more immediate than it could be in religious literature or religious organization; for the life of a man is vital, while these are artificial. And we are confident that upon the historic Jesus the verdict of any open-minded student can only be one of reverence and acclaim.

To be sure, the quest of the historic Jesus presents many difficulties. But sober historical science, while in doubt about many details, is in no doubt whatever about the main lines of Jesus' teaching and character, and of his career before the public. And St. Paul has touched the throbbing pulse of Jesus' significance in this laconic phrase, pregnant with paradox, "Christ crucified": that is to say, a king, slain; that is to say, a man superb and commanding in the quality of his living, and never more regal than in what to

all appearances constituted utter defeat. For in this paradox we find what the hungry hearts of mankind are above all looking for: the assertion that life is more than the body—that the soul counts for more than do things; that a realm of spiritual and eternal reality is accessible to the children of earth, irrespective of their earthly conditions; that, indeed, pain and ruin may be the gateway to this wider, richer realm of righteousness, truth, and abiding and abundant life.

So our religion—the religion of a man—makes a vital appeal, especially to those who hunger and thirst after righteousness. In the cross they are given to discern a principle of reconciliation, despite their sins, shortcomings and follies, with the meaning, the heart, the living center of all being. A book can only impart ideas; a Church can only sponsor movements; our hearts know that a man, and that man by suffering made perfect, can give the life that is in him to them who follow him.

Further, the life of Jesus Christ, the central theme and urge of Christendom, answers to the altruistic idealism in the hearts of all men of good will. One of the most encouraging phases of current thinking, in this time when many declare religion to be at low ebb, is that every social reformer, however cranky and ill-advised his projects may be, alleges that they are based

upon the teachings of Jesus; because he rejoices to find indubitable justification for his underlying motive, with however unwise a program it may be linked, in the spirit of Jesus. The very radicalism of our time is saturated with the intention to follow Jesus; and its exponents sometimes give evidence that they would follow him, if necessary, even so far as the cross. Is there not in this fact a wonderful promise of Christ's triumph?

Not only does the life of Jesus, the focal point of Christian devotion, correspond to the deepest of man's moral impulses; but also it challenges the intellects of all who will weigh it honestly, as no other life does, so that to follow him is no fanatical decision, but is at least recognized by all thoughtful and informed people as rationally defensible. Again let me cite a current interest in Jesus, far more widespread than the influence of the Church which functions in his name; but of a different sort: the world's thinkers today are thinking about Jesus. In illustration of this interest I think of two extraordinary books of recent years, by men of no great profundity indeed, but fairly representative of the current intellectual type. Papini's "Story of Christ" is of no value as a contribution to history or Christology; it is deliberately extravagant and credulous. But it is of great moment

as showing us, especially in the concluding "Prayer to Christ" omitted from the English translation, a man, saturated in twentieth-century sophistication, who, finding no satisfaction, even for his mind, in this culture of disillusionment, has therefore brought his wits, such as they are—the world esteems them more highly than I do—to the service of Christ. Mr. J. Middleton Murry's "Jesus, Man of Genius" emanates from a mind as brilliant as that of Papini, and better balanced. From the editor of the London Athenæum the literary world expected, by the gauge of his past performances, a supercilious and perhaps even sarcastic treatment of the supreme human personality. But, instead, Mr. Murry, with all his detachment from those spiritual convictions which we honor as religious but which he would decry as superstitious, nevertheless professes himself, while unable to accept Jesus as God made man, an avowed adherent of Jesus as man made God, and has written perhaps the most reverent and beautiful biography of the Master ever composed by one who does not grant his deific claims.

Thus the life of Jesus appeals to the hearts of men who long for purity in their own lives and for justice in the social order. It challenges and overmasters the intellects of men, whatever their

metaphysical views, who apply the utmost acumen of modern learning to the interpretation of his character and precepts. Therefore, if we will be propagandists of Christ rather than of the Church or the Bible, we may expect at least a respectful hearing. And we shall not find it hard to lead men forth, from this preliminary respect for the figure we present, into a faith in the eternal and invisible God, like that of him for whom they profess such respect. This is, after all, the chief worth for human thought of the life of Jesus: not that it presents an example, specifies a principle, cogent for men of every race in every age; but that it inspires by that example a sympathetic and receptive interest in the attitude toward the mystery of the universe, or rather in the conscious fellowship with the loving Lord of the universe, which sustained him in and for his incomparable moral achievement, so that to honor Christ crucified, and vindicating spiritual values by his paradoxical triumph on the cross, leads out into faith in God the Father, and hope of His mercies, like the faith and hope which underlay Christ's fortitude on Calvary.

We have not defined Christianity. We shall not ever agree as to all the details of this ancient and widely diversified system of faith and practice. But I trust that we have at least clarified our thought as to the center, the vital nucleus, of

Christianity. That nucleus is not a book; though the book of our faith is precious. It is not a Church; though the fellowship of believers one with another, and their organized coöperation in furtherance of their common cause, are invaluable. It is a man—a king—and that king slain, yet in his dying proving to the conscience of the world, as no fine-wrought argument could demonstrate it, that it is not things but souls, that it is not gains but principles, which in the last instance count. In this fact, that Christianity is the religion of a man, and such a man as Jesus, is to be found the secret of its perennial charm for all men everywhere, and the hope of its ultimate conquest over evil in the establishment of a regimen of righteousness throughout the world.

X

BEGINNING OF THE GOSPEL

The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. —St. Mark 1:1

It is interesting to note the contrast in the introductions of their narratives by the four Evangelists; not only interesting, but also instructive. The first and third Gospels give us the beautiful nativity stories, so precious to the Christian imagination. The fourth Gospel, in its magnificent prologue, sketches a profound philosophy of the cosmic relations of him whose story it tells. This second Gospel, the oldest of them all, has neither a metaphysical theory nor an account of the birth of our Lord to preface its narrative of his words and works, but simply the terse phrase quoted above, in which the concluding and most significant words, "the Son of God," are perhaps an interpolation, as they are lacking in some of the early manuscripts. Yet this Gospel of St. Mark was set forth and accepted as, in the opinion of the Apostolic Church, sufficing for the religious guidance of all who would follow Jesus. This implies that its author and his readers did not feel the need

of a philosophical interpretation of the person of Christ, nor of any detailed information concerning the beginning of his life. In view of the tremendous emphasis placed upon the doctrine of the Virgin Birth by many later thinkers, this is indeed surprising. It leads us to ask whether such an emphasis is, after all, necessary or advisable. The Virgin Birth is nowhere in the Bible directly referred to, save in the introductory passages of the first and third Gospels, known by the names of St. Matthew and St. Luke respectively. There is no reference to it in any recorded sermon of an Apostle, although such terms as "The Son of God" and "The Only-Begotten" are familiarly applied throughout the early Christian literature to Jesus. But these terms are obviously susceptible of explanation as indicating a spiritual rather than a physical affiliation of the Savior to the Heavenly Father—the adjective "only-begotten" being then employed metaphorically to indicate a special and unique relationship, as contrasted with the general truth that all men are God's children. And not a few reverent and competent students of the New Testament maintain that the nativity stories are later additions to the Gospels of which they now form a part, additions composed as imaginative elucidations of these familiar terms.

Whether that be the case or not, I suppose we shall never be in a position to decide. The question as to the way in which the earthly life of Jesus began is a question of fact, upon which at this distance we cannot from the historical standpoint dogmatically pass, in either sense. Certainly the nativity stories are beloved by all Christians. As certainly, there are insuperable difficulties attendant upon any attempt to harmonize the story as told by St. Matthew with the form in which St. Luke presents it. As certainly again, even such a miracle as the Virgin Birth would be possible to Almighty God. But St. Mark's omission of all mention of it should lead us to ask ourselves seriously whether in any way it adds to our faith that Christ is the Son of God, to believe that he had no earthly father; whether, indeed, great stress upon the allegation that he had no earthly father, as essential to sound faith, be not disconcertingly materialistic in tone; whether, since St. Mark and St. John could write the Gospel and all the Apostles could preach it without ever raising the point, we would not do better to pass it over in silence, with frank uncertainty about it, and to rest our appeal in behalf of Christ where he himself rests it, upon the character of the man rather than upon an alleged supernatural distinction setting him off from birth from the rest of mankind,

with whom he deliberately, in all other points save sin, sought to identify himself.

In fifteen verses, including this brief introductory verse, St. Mark carries us through the period of the preparation of the Gospel and the actual beginning of Jesus' ministry. The first of the episodes in this supremely significant series of the antecedents of redemption, is the preaching of St. John Baptist. There are three aspects of this preaching which we shall do well to note.

First, the man himself St. John Baptist was an eccentric, a typical ascetic, who had separated himself from the common life of men, brought his body by mortifying measures into servile subjection, and was exemplifying a way of life which for all men to follow would mean the destruction of society. This way of life was in startling contrast not only with general practice but also with the subsequent example of Jesus himself, who was a normal man among men. The prevalence of the ascetic ideal in the medieval Church, in which it was presented as the noblest type of spiritual character, was an element of weakness fruitful of corruption. We find in ourselves very little sympathy indeed with such eccentricities. Yet Providence employed St. John Baptist as the forerunner of Jesus, a special man, of a special sort, for a

special task. And Providence is always doing much the same thing, raising up peculiar individuals for peculiar responsibilities. To meditate upon this fact, of which every notable era in history is illustrative, is to learn more tolerance than we usually entertain for people whose way of living is other than our own. It is no sufficient ground of condemnation that a man is found refusing to conform to the accepted norm of behavior in the world. While we may well be thankful that to most of us is given a reasonable measure of companionable likeness to other men, yet, especially in a time when this is so prevalent as to threaten the reduction of human nature to a monotonous level, however high, we shall be wise to be tolerant rather than hostile and minatory toward the exceptional person who stands out from the crowd, like St. John Baptist, notable for his oddity. To mention but one relatively recent example, Abraham Lincoln was odd to the point of being preposterous in his social relations. But Abraham Lincoln, like St. John Baptist, was raised up for a special work which no other sort of man could do. That may be true of some of the queer people whom we dislike for their queerness. Perhaps God made them that way for a purpose!

Second, the method of preaching which St.

John Baptist used was equally unusual. He was, in the terminology of our own time, a revivalist. He was not an intellectual preacher, he was not a settled teacher; he was a voice crying in the wilderness, crying so shrilly that people went to hear him out of curiosity, if for no better reason. But he had a real message for them. His country at that time needed a revivalist; and no intellectual preacher could have met that need. Frankly, I do not like revivalists in general; nor, I am sure, do you. They irritate me; they do not otherwise move me at all. Many of them are vulgar, or worse; for the evangelistic method, so-called, is available for and employed by many men whose degree of culture and whose moral quality render them unfitted and unacceptable for sustained and constructive tasks in the ministry. But, again, as unique individuals are sometimes required for extraordinary occasions, so extraordinary methods like this are sometimes needed to stir people up who have lapsed, as had these Jews who were in the prophet John's shifting audiences, into a state of religious coma. Revivalism has not always been in our own country at its present low ebb. I have an idea that before another Reformation comes we shall see revivalism restored to respectability by the accession of a higher and more consecrated type of

preachers to this ministry. It is bitter medicine; but sometimes the world needs bitter medicine. Grievous disorders cannot always be cured by sugar pills. If there is any criticism more deserved than all others by the present state of the Church—and as a consistent liberal and universalist I feel justified in proffering it—it is that most of our preaching is too sweet, too easy, not urgent enough on the consciences of the careless masses.

Third, there was a beautiful humility about St. John Baptist. He knew that he had not the last word to say. He was preparing his hearers for one who would come after him, and who would be greater than he. Most men would have been depressed by that certainty. Some men would have felt that it was hardly worth while to do their best, if all they could possibly accomplish was to be subordinate to effects which another would achieve. But only little men would feel that way. John proved his greatness by his modesty. He was willing, proud, eager to do no more than arrange the preliminaries and set the stage for the great drama of the Gospel which would presently be enacted, after he himself should be out of sight. Many of us are conscious of similar limitations upon our opportunities and abilities. We know that no supreme accomplishment is to be ex-

pected of us. Shall we, then, be disheartened? Always one greater than we is to come, and always that greater one must project his personality against the background of our inconspicuous labors. He who demands the first place for himself, and refuses to do his part if he cannot have first place, degrades himself by this very pride, whereas, by consecrating himself in conquest of his pride, he might ennoble his character, and perhaps even perpetuate his memory, as did St. John Baptist.

The second episode in this series is the baptism of our Lord, with the great spiritual experience which came to him upon that occasion. Why should Jesus have been baptized, under John's preaching of repentance, unto the remission of sin? Had Jesus sins to repent of? All that we know of him, as well as the tradition cherished in his Church, confirms us in the conviction that this man was without stain of guilt upon his conscience. But, as St. John Baptist was willing to humble himself that Jesus might be exalted, so Jesus, the exalted one, was willing to humble himself that he might, by conforming to the practice of all other good men with the like opportunity, identify himself with them in their thought; meet them on their own level, without compromise of his own character; merge himself with the mass, that he might bet-

ter raise the mass, instead of standing above the mass in a discouraging attitude of spiritual condescension. Sometimes we pastors meet worthy people who are not Church members because, they say, they can be equally good Christians without such membership. Perhaps they can. I doubt it; but I want to yield the point, that upon the example of Jesus in receiving baptism I may meet their argument in terms of their own alleged perfection. If the sinless Christ thought best to join a penitential movement in order to be at one with the other men of his time who, though needing repentance, sought as he did to establish righteousness on earth, will any man in our time who professes to honor Jesus as his exemplar hold aloof from the society in which alone right-minded people consolidate their energies for the more effective accomplishment of the aims which such an one must seek?

Perhaps, if these, who are already so good that they do not need the Church, would follow in the footsteps of the Savior as he with voluntary self-humiliation accepts baptism, to them there might come, as there came to him, some higher blessing than has yet been vouchsafed, in acknowledgment of their brotherly feeling. For it was at this moment, when he had performed an action which from the standpoint of his own personality was superfluous, but from the un-

selfish standpoint was immeasurably advantageous, that "he saw the heavens rent asunder and the Spirit as a dove descending upon him, and a voice came out of the heavens, 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.'" The suggestion is strong—and this has some bearing on our first point concerning the nature of Jesus' divine sonship—that it was through this experience that he first knew himself as the Son of God. However this may be, certainly there is an indication here of rapture which came because a soul was ready for it. And such rapture has an infinitely stimulating influence upon the soul. We need today men and women who will see visions and experience mystic ecstasies, induced, not by artificial over-stimulation of the religious imagination, but by treading the path of duty constantly and with faith. We have, alas, too many, I sometimes fear, of whom it may be charitably said that religion comes to them in accordance with an inadvertent emendation of this text by a theological student who, in a recent paper, by a mistake of one letter on his typewriter, was led to speak of "the Spirit as a doze descending upon him." Doubtless that explains the people who sleep in Church!

It was just at this point that the third great episode occurred: the temptation of Jesus. Of that temptation I shall not now speak at any

length, but shall mention only this aspect of it: that, since temptation came to the sinless one just after his greatest spiritual experience, we are not to be discouraged about our spiritual state when temptation comes to us. I have known Christians who were ashamed to be tempted, who thought that the very fact that insinuating suggestions of evil sometimes entered their consciousness was a proof that they were far from God. Nothing of the sort. Usually, I think, the hardest temptations to overcome come to the people most able to overcome them, just as the severest trials frequently come to people whose character qualifies them to surmount them. This is because there are certain problems, increasing in difficulty as one advances spiritually, which must be solved on the way to perfection; and we are not prepared for the harder problems until we have already attained some measure of advancement!

And then—John's ministry concluded with his betrayal, Jesus' baptism accomplished, his vision achieved, his temptation conquered—the Son of God and of Man began his redemptive ministry. He began it with a high and holy sense of elation: "The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is at hand." I wonder if he foresaw at that moment clearly that to inaugurate the Kingdom he must lay down his earthly life.

Certainly that understanding came to him long before he made the supreme sacrifice; yet never throughout his subsequent career do we fail to hear this joyous and triumphant overtone in all of his preaching: "The Kingdom of God is at hand." And how were men to receive the Kingdom, to promote its establishment, to co-operate in its successive victories? "Repent ye, and believe in the good tidings!" The verb "to repent" means literally "to turn about one's mind," to change one's viewpoint. Is not that always the condition for receiving new and larger blessings from God? What is there that comes between us and His bounty save that we turn our minds away from Him? Is not the Kingdom of God always at hand for them who look toward that Kingdom rather than toward the kingdoms of this world? The Gospel which began with this message has not yet been fulfilled; the Kingdom is not yet ascendant over all the affairs of men, as surely some day it shall be. But still the invitation stands: "Change your viewpoint!" That is, look away from self and the passions of self to God and the service of God; from hatred to love, from time to the eternal hope; and great things, of ineffable glory, shall be accomplished in your sight.

After all, it is because I believe in this urgent invitation and its special cogency for a time so

materially-minded as our own that I have just said a word in behalf of revivalism. I hope in my life-time to see, upon the foundation of a sane and defensible theology, centering as all Christian thinking must do in the benign and luminous person of Jesus, a revival of religion sweep this land. While the only people to attempt such a revival are people who think in the terms of sixteenth century dogmatism, this cannot occur. But when we Christians who are liberal enough to love new truth, and at the same time loyal enough to keep ever in the fellowship of him who is the same yesterday, today and forever, undertake this vivid ministry of conversion and reconciliation, then I am confident that problems will be solved and progress achieved for our nation and the world in ways we have no reason to hope for while light and warmth so seldom accompany one another in religious experience, and the world so eagerly indulges its mad lust after things—forgetful of the eternal principles of spiritual life, as they have been set forth once for all in the blessed Gospel of Jesus Christ.

XI

SLAVE OR FREE?

They have chosen their own ways.—Isaiah 66:3

This is a clause of a terrific indictment of the enemies of God who had introduced corrupt practices into the religion of Israel. It does not raise the question of their responsibility. It takes it for granted that men are free to choose between good and evil, so that an evil choice merits reprehension and punishment. And we feel instinctively that this is true; that, despite all onslaughts of malice and adverse circumstance, at bottom every man is free, to make or mar his own character.

Nevertheless, the question as to whether the freedom of the will is real or a delusion has often been raised. It used to come up chiefly in connection with the theological concept of God's omnipotence. If God has all power, how can we have any power? This consideration has led many students of religion to pronounce man a slave, and his boasted liberty of choice a mere futile and pathetic misunderstanding of his true relation to the universe. The classic names in

the history of this depressing view are St. Paul (in certain aspects of his teachings), St. Augustine and Calvin. According to these theologians, and many who accept their conclusions, man is a puppet and God pulls the strings.

Nowadays, however, the question whether man be slave or free occurs most frequently in connection with science. The natural sciences proceed upon the hypothesis that cause and effect are not only uniform in the physical realm, but that the law of causality applies to the whole range of nature, including the so-called spiritual. So we have biologists who interpret every human event in terms of the mastery of heredity and environment over the individual; historians who attribute a similar coercive dominion to economic necessity over the mass movements of mankind; and psychologists—especially the behaviorist school—who plausibly represent human consciousness and its decisions as inert results of compelling natural forces. According to this view, man is a machine, and brute Nature pulls the levers.

Now I do not propose to deny that determinism—the doctrine that man only seems to be free, and is in fact enslaved to God or nature—is more logical than the claim that man's freedom is real. But I am suspicious of logic when it flies in the face of common sense. To be sure,

our common-sense judgments about many things have to be corrected by scientific observation. But a valid analysis of common-sense impressions must authenticate those impressions for practical purposes even though impugning their ultimate accuracy. Thus the Copernican astronomy tells us that the earth moves around the sun, but nevertheless leaves us sunrise and sunset for everyday use. The resolution of matter by physics into atomic energy, probably electrical in type, leaves us nevertheless stone and wood to build our houses with. But determinism, by denying the reality of free will, takes away from us all confidence in our capacity to choose good or evil, and therewith all incentive to do our best. So we must insist that, though there be no room in a logical system for God, or natural causation, and free will at the same time, we must in the interest of truth as attested by practical efficiency rise above mere logic, and view logic as simply a convenient systematization of phenomena for certain defined ends within a strictly limited range, but beyond that range incompetent to interpret the world aright.

But this leaves us with a paradox. We cannot in any given instance successfully contest the operation of the law of causality; we will not withhold from God our recognition of His omnipotence. Yet we must maintain, for we know

more deeply than we know anything else, that our wills are free. This involves a contradiction in terms. But what of it? Any explanation of life which covers the whole ground smoothly and without a break must leave out the vast factor of the unknown, which every man with a reasonable and decent modesty as to the present reach of the human intellect will acknowledge as hedging in the little field of truth which is open to our exhaustive investigation. So conscious have I become of this paradoxical aspect of life as it really is that I am suspicious of any pretended system which is logical throughout, and find in this suspicion a stronger argument than in any attempt at philosophical refutation. When a socialist, for instance, or an absolute idealist, brings his scheme of things entire to me and wants to persuade me to accept it, I do not try to pick flaws in his arguments; I am content just to draw his attention to the fact that he is altogether too logical; that in the interest of his logic he has left out certain actual elements of experience which, though irreconcilable with any man-made scheme and unintelligible to our present understanding, must nevertheless be admitted and reckoned with.

As a matter of fact, it is probable that most people who deny that our wills are free do so in part, at least, to excuse their own faults and

shortcomings. It is an old device to blame one's own sins upon some one else. Adam in the garden blamed his fall on Eve; and Eve blamed hers on the serpent. St. Paul, in that impressive passage in the Roman epistle, in which he describes the torment of the divided soul, lapses into a convenient determinism when he says: "So now it is no more I that do it, but sin which dwelleth in me." Throughout the Middle Ages sinners blamed their transgressions upon the devil and his fiends. Poor old devil! As shorthand for the destructive forces in the universe he still holds a picturesque place in our thoughts; as a real personality I do not believe that he exists. But even if there be a devil in very truth, yet all he can do is to influence us toward evil; he cannot compel our wills. And the same holds for those modern substitutes for demons as the responsible agents of human action, inherited tendencies, abnormal glandular secretions, and complexes. The influence of these and other similar factors—the persuasion which they exercise upon us—cannot be gainsaid. But, be it ever remembered, influence is one thing, compulsion quite another.

Perverse and depressing influences from whatever source constitute the opposition to our achievement of sound moral ideals, which we intuitively identify with our own essential and en-

during interest. But it is well that we have opposition. For without opposition we should never have occasion to exercise our powers, and to develop them through exercise. The saints have not been men and women to whom goodness came easy. Conversely, people to whom goodness comes easy are not the stuff that saints are made of, because they lack that vigor of personality which underlies all distinction of character. A football team does not enjoy playing against a rival team which is so weak and ill-disciplined that the winning team rolls up a tremendous score almost automatically; a good game, from the standpoint of players as well as observers, is only possible when the opposing forces are more evenly matched. Likewise in the game of life it is good that our temptations should be strong; for then only will we develop moral skill—the art of right living—by hitting the line hard.

We are, then, not slaves but free men and women. Our first reaction to that realization should be one of exhilaration. For it means that nobody can control us in our own despite. Our bodies and our estates may be subject to other people; but the hardest master cannot dictate our thoughts, or the spirit in which we obey his commands. Nowhere is this principle more tellingly evinced than on the cross of Christ. The

body of our blessed Lord was at the disposal of his enemies; if he had surrendered his spirit to their disposal also, his crucifixion would long since have been lost from sight as just one of the innumerable legal murders of history. Because his spirit rose in triumphant defiance against the masters of his body, his cross is the symbol of the redemption of human personality through the ages.

But this declaration of inner and essential independence puts a burden on us which some of us are reluctant to bear. We can no longer blame anyone but ourselves if we serve wrong motives and do evil deeds. It is up to us to choose. It is a sobering thought, as we make that choice, that our thoughts and actions must affect many others besides ourselves, through our influence upon them. But it is we who will have to take the major consequences, and who will richly deserve them, whether they be of reward or of penalty.

Since we are free, we do not have to do the bidding of our appetites. Our appetites belong to us; we do not belong to them. The coward will follow his passions, and then try to sneak out of his guilt by alleging that they were too strong for him. But the brave man will, if he has sinned, acknowledge that he did so because he was foolish enough to prefer immediate satis-

faction or advantage to the longer, deeper gladness of self-respect grounded in moral achievement. And for the future he will be on his guard lest his passions score again—actually rejoicing in the recurrence of acute conflict because he knows that he could not suffer a powerful temptation unless he had a powerful will to cope with it, and that if he keeps on coping with it adequately long enough the temptation will be played out.

Again, our freedom means that we need not be slaves of habit. Most of us have now, or have at some time had, some habit of which we are ashamed and in which we no longer find even the delusion of pleasure, but which has become so ingrained, as we say, that we yield to it without any resistance, as though it had come to stay. But that is utterly unnecessary. It betokens moral indolence. If we want to, we can pull ourselves up short, and step out of the downward groove of the inane, degrading repetition of past errors, and take our stand on a firm footing of uncompromising self-discipline.

Not only can we cease to do evil, if we will; we can also learn to do well. On any day, when we really make up our minds to it, we can start a whole new train of habits, of which we need not be ashamed, and by which we shall be both helping other people and promoting our own

spiritual progress. Sometimes we beguile ourselves into moral inertia by entertaining the notion that when presently some big and dramatic opportunity for right action presents itself, then we shall make the new start of which we are in need. But it is extremely improbable that any such opportunity will ever arrive, unless we make the new start right away, and go forward to meet it. We have a way of overlooking commonplace opportunities for right action which our familiar surroundings afford us every day. But commonplace opportunities are just as fruitful as extraordinary ones, if our hearts are set on righteousness.

Thus we are at liberty to achieve that positive growth in understanding and usefulness which is the corollary of a refusal to continue in wrong ways, and which betokens the fulfilment of the purpose of our life upon the earth. We can do this, whatever be the limitations upon our lot. To be sure, it may be that we cannot remove our limitations. But we can grow in spite of them, as ivy grows over stones and in their chinks and crannies, though it cannot grow through them. Blind men may not recover their sight; but blind men have achieved seats in the United States senate on their merits. Invalids may not recover their health; but one of the most useful men I ever knew had been bed-ridden, when last

I saw him, for eighteen years. Deaf men may not regain their hearing; but Mr. Ernest Elmo Calkins, whose essays have brought delight to so many readers in recent years, is, despite the handicap of deafness, the most conspicuous member of the advertising profession in America.

When I was a boy I knew an old woman, a physician, who came to the point where she confronted a dreadful death at not more than a year's remove. But, as I later learned that she had confided to my mother, she believed that she could keep going until within six weeks or thereabouts of the end; and she made up her mind to do so, because she proposed to make her life count for good, against even the limitation of that darkest of menaces, to the last possible moment. I was in her office for some minor malady the day before she took to her bed; her manner had not changed, she had made no concession to the harassing encroachments of disease. I used to visit her while she was dying; I have seen her in moments when under some excruciating visitation of pain there was a look as of a tortured wild animal in her eyes. But those moments were the brief and unacknowledged interruptions of the continued exercise of her gift for sound and illuminating counsel, lighted up by an unfailing wit and a strenuous benevolence.

When that woman left this world, it is safe to say that it was with an increase of moral stature, wrested by her free will from the advancing shadow of the grave in the last year of her life, greater than many of us achieve in a whole lifetime.

When one considers such instances as these, one feels utterly ashamed of that mood of discouragement which we all have at times experienced, and which signifies a useless and sinful surrender to be the slaves of circumstance when we might be, under God, the masters of our fate.

Determinists old and new, theological or scientific, to the contrary notwithstanding, we are not slaves; we are free. Our moral choices are our own acts, and their quality depends upon our initiative. Multitudes there are upon whom the world might pass, in the brief instant before they fade from memory, this judgment which is our text, as a sort of collective epitaph: "They have chosen their own ways," degrading the divine potentialities of their being by following paths of ease and self-indulgence which lead to destruction. But it rests with us, if we will, to exercise our choice in such a way that we shall never in the future have reason to lament our decision, with shame and confusion—to choose the ways of God, the paths of righteousness, that

we may find true happiness in serving Him and mankind, and in working with Him to achieve our own reward in immortal personalities ever growing in the comprehension and enjoyment of spiritual reality.

XII

WHAT IS SIN?

Wash you, make you clean; . . . cease to do evil, learn to do well; . . . though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow. ISAIAH 1:16, 17, 18.

IN approaching the discussion of sin, its subjective consequences, their implication, and the way out, we shall do well to preface by drawing a distinction between sin and crime. Crime is the transgression of law; sin is the transgression of conscience. Ideally this should be a distinction without a difference; for the aim of jurisprudence is to enact and administer only such laws as are consonant with conscience. But the demands of conscience change with times and occasions; no absolute right is revealed in human experience, and the best approximations we can make to the final standard in differing circumstances will not always be harmonious with one another. Some things which are right for us were wrong for our fathers; some things obviously wrong in the twentieth century were right enough under the simpler conditions of earlier days. Legislation responds slowly,

however, to changes in the requirements of conscience; so that one may actually be doing right by refusing obedience to a law outgrown, as when the early Christians refused to render divine homage to the Roman emperors. So our concern in this discussion is with conscience, not with law.

But if the verdict of conscience is variable, what deep and constant significance can conscience have? Just this, that, whatever its command may be in a given instance, it is a judgment which we are instinctively moved to render in terms of right and wrong. These terms are of an order distinct from those other antitheses, as true and false, beautiful and ugly, pleasant and unpleasant, which constitute the categories of reason. To illustrate: not every action enjoined by conscience is agreeable, or the reverse; he who supposes that goodness consists in always doing what one does not want to do is as mistaken as though he supposed that goodness consisted in always doing what one does want to do. We may some time arrive at an ultimate code of mundane morality; but, whether we do so or not, that our minds are so constituted as to think in terms of right and wrong—of a judgment directed upon character, upon the essence rather than the accidents of being—is the first and greatest evidence that we are not beings of

the earth only, animals of a subtler growth, but also deeply related to a spiritual order transcending time and space.

Though we are thus instinctively inclined to judge in terms of right and wrong, nevertheless one of the perils of that hardening process to which the years expose our minds is that we shall not develop this intuition, or that, after it has been developed, it will yet be atrophied by neglect. The first requirement for building personality worthy of our opportunities for growth in this world is that our conscience, our moral judgment, be strengthened by exercise, so that the relation with the higher order of life which it betokens may be preserved and strengthened. To this end training in obedience, to precepts of the home and of society in general, serves for children and the mentally immature; as St. Paul said, "The law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ"—that is, to that free envisagement and pursuit of the moral ideal which constitutes the life of Christ in the soul of man. For those who have reached that degree of maturity at which a hiatus becomes occasionally manifest between law and conscience, the agency best adapted for the stimulation of the moral judgment is organized religion. The first function of the Church, in relation to the issues of human conduct, is

not to lay down laws, but to keep people aware of the importance of the distinction between right and wrong—to stir up sluggish consciences, to start the negligent and keep the attentive thinking about duty rather than about advantage, and thus to inspire the faithful to live by the light of their own consciences, neither enslaved to the dictates of others, nor benighted in the darkness of their own passions undiscriminatingly indulged.

Sin being, then, a man's transgression of his own conscience, let us analyze the sense of guilt which is the witness to sin in one's heart, that we may find out what sin means and how we can escape from it. First, we should never feel guilty if we did not believe that our wrongdoing had been voluntary. Free will is the presupposition of every verdict of conscience. Free will is denied in two ways. First, by the guilty, to dodge the discomfort and blame attendant upon their misdeeds. We all like to say, by way of excuse, "I just couldn't help it." When we say it, however, we know very well, in the depths of our hearts, that what we mean is, "I didn't want to help it!" Second, by philosophers who cannot find a logical place for it in their scheme of the universe. That is a real difficulty, akin to the enigma presented to the naturalist by the phenomena of living matter. The naturalist can

resolve a physical organism into its constituent elements—all except life itself, which he can find with no microscope or scalpel. But leave life out, and the organism will resolve itself into its constituent elements, instead of continuing to function as it did before. We have yet to hear, however, of a naturalist who says there is no life, because he cannot fit life into his scheme of the elements. So why should it disturb us that free will is similarly elusive of our logic? There it is; though we cannot account for it, yet we cannot maintain self-consciousness without admitting it, in practice if not in theory. And in this presupposition of the moral judgment, that our wills are our own and our conduct is as we freely make it, I find another telling testimony to man's kinship with the eternal.

An element of the sense of guilt which is so prominent that its importance and value have been much exaggerated is fear of the consequences of wrong actions. This is an ignoble sentiment, of which every self-respecting man ought to be ashamed. If, in the exercise of our freedom, we are going to do wrong, then let us at least take the consequences like men, instead of shuddering and shrinking at thought of what may befall us. It were better to endure torment manfully rather than to undergo the qualms and bear the stigma of cowardice in outward ease.

It is astonishing that the dread of hell should have been pressed home upon men's timorous souls, as it often has been, by teachers of religion, as a motive for coming back to God. What sort of Christians can they be whose principal motive for following Christ is to save their own skins? I do not find in the records that Jesus tried to frighten people into the Kingdom of Heaven; probably because frightened people would be of as little use in the Kingdom as they are anywhere else. Moreover, fear of consequences is not peculiarly associated with sin; it may now and then be felt, quite as reasonably, in connection with obedience to conscience, as in the instance already adduced, of the refusal of the early Christians to render deific honors to Cæsar. Fear of the consequences in that case would have been a motive for refusing to do right, and doubtless was such a motive with many; but the many who saved their skins by compromising their souls have sunk long since into ignominious oblivion, while the martyrs who were true men, with the courage of their convictions, will be remembered gratefully forever. Being true men, they would doubtless, if they had chosen to do wrong, have had the courage of their sins, and even so would have been worthier of respect than the people whose motive for righteousness is self-preservation. Bet-

ter a splendid rogue than pusillanimous saint.

But the sense of guilt is by no means identical with mere fear of consequences. There remain two other elements in it, of far greater weight upon every soul not sunk in cowardice. The first of these is a sense of disappointment and self-disgust because we have been unworthy of ourselves. This feeling comes to us even when there are no outward consequences of any sort to dread. We hate ourselves, and wish we could get away from ourselves, and do all that we can to forget ourselves, when our consciences tell us that we have been untrue to the very fiber and essence of our being by committing sins known, it may be, to ourselves alone. Now that is an extremely depressing feeling; yet, when we look at its implications, it seems to me that it affords ground for pride and hope. For we should not feel that sin is infidelity to our real selves, if we had not an awareness, as innate as the assurance of our freedom, that we are not mere dust—animated clods crawling for a day over our mother earth and falling then with other worms into dreamless sleep—but creatures of air and flame, born of the lightning of God, and designed to move with Him forever in the high places of His empyrean. I am glad to have been at times terribly ashamed of myself, before the bar of my own conscience; for that shame is

rooted in a deep consciousness that my real self is of God, so that to refuse obedience to conscience, the voice of God, is to lose touch with my own soul.

The second of these more significant elements in the sense of guilt is a feeling of grief and horror, as though we had inflicted horror and grief upon the spirit of the universe, and they were reflected back from the universal spirit upon our own. I do not think that by any rationalization this conviction that sin has brought discord instead of harmony with some personal force beyond ourselves and this earth can be explained away. It goes through the consciousness of every tribe and type of man of which we have any record; it is not, I believe, the result of religious teaching, but the ground of that outreach after the spiritual which results in religion; it has found pathetic expression in the propitiatory sacrifices of all faiths, from the altars of cruel idols to the cross of Christ; and it seems to me to point unmistakably, out of the depths of racial consciousness, toward infinite Personality, toward God, with whom it behooves us to maintain filial harmony, but from whom by sin we do what we can to cut ourselves off. I am glad that when we sin there is this distress, deeper than our disappointment with ourselves, deeper far than any fear of consequences, which

bespeaks a slight and wound inflicted on the Infinite Being whose we are; for I am well assured that it is He who makes us feel that we have wounded Him, so that in this consciousness we have an intimate witness to His nature, like our own, and to His concern for our lives.

To him whose moral judgment is so keen that to transgress conscience brings with poignancy these twin afflictions, self-detestation and the sorrowing sense of discord with the universe, it must seem, in the hour of guilt's realization, that the only hope of the soul is to get back out of the shadow of shame into the sunlight of honor and harmony again. But how is so great a matter to be transacted? The word of the Lord through the prophecy of Isaiah, fairly representative of many such utterances through many other scribes in Holy Writ, tells us to do it for ourselves: "Wash you, make you clean." But this is a divine invitation; and for us to take the initiative upon the divine invitation is for us to be assured of divine coöperation toward the end which we seek. The greatest compliment God could pay His children on the earth is to make them responsible for their own emergence out of the slough of sin, at least in so far as that they must first seek His aid before He will vouchsafe it to them. For that means that He regards mankind as of like being with Himself, upon

whom therefore even the boon of pardon and peace is not to be thrust unsolicited, but by whom it is to be achieved through the consent and free motion of their own wills. Even when we are farthest down and seem most helpless, there is something we can do, there is something indeed that we must do, for none other can do it for us. We can turn our hearts from filth to purity, our eyes from the gutter to God, and thus take the first step toward our own restoration.

And how shall we thus cleanse ourselves, so that our sins shall be white as snow? Since the profoundest element in our sense of guilt is the sorrowing conviction of estrangement from God, upon what conditions will He consent to our reconciliation? The view, probably born of acquaintance with earthly autocrats, has widely prevailed, that we must repay God, for the injuries done His righteousness by sin, in sacrifice of something with equivalent value. And this old notion of sacrifice has been carried over into the Christian faith, so that a common way of representing the atoning ministry of our Lord is to say that on the cross he bore our sins as a substitute, a victim in our behalf of the wrath of God, or of His outraged justice. Now I am grateful for that concept, because of the reassurance it carries to primitive minds adrift from God, so that they may have courage to anchor

themselves again in His loving-kindness. But I strongly incline to believe that this expiatory notion can be applied to our Lord only as a figure of speech, accommodating truth to limited understanding. For by no means can we hold that God is actually a being of such a disposition that He must be appeased before He can regard us with favor; since Jesus has taught us that God is no hostile tyrant, but our Father and Friend. So I must believe that the passion of our Lord changed, not God's attitude toward men, but—by its vivid persuasions—men's attitude toward God; and that, as this passage from the writings of a Prophet who long antedated Jesus would indicate, the sole condition prerequisite to restored harmony with God after our sin is that we turn to Him in confidence of His love, confessing our transgressions, and seeking to be restored to the favor of His grace.

There is no substitute that I know of for genuine penitence, expressed in prayer to God, to lift men out of sin and its oppressions into joy and light again. The need for penitence has been, I fear, little stressed in our liberal churches of late years; for we have been so concerned with new theologies that we have neglected old processes, cogent and essential under every theology, for the well-being of the soul. It is a simple fact of experience, however one may account for

it, that a heart burdened with guilt does find surcease from its woes by turning with faith to God, who does in some way make known to His sincerely repentant children that He loves them, and is no longer wounded by their sins, and will be with them and sustain them as they go forward in a new and better way.

As by repentance and the prayer of faith we find the way out of the grief of our guilt, so by drafting and embracing new purposes, in the light of conscience once more heeded, do we set out upon the way which leads us up out of self-disgust into courage, zest and hope restored, and through them to worthy attainment. It is of interest at this point to note that sin is represented in our text, as by our own retrospective repulsion, as defilement. Dirt is matter out of place, and sin is action out of place. It consists either in the indulgence of legitimate impulses in wrong ways, or in the pursuit of happiness, a legitimate goal, along faulty and inadequate lines. So, having found peace with God, we find cleanliness of living again by a sort of spiritual housecleaning, whereby we bring the elements of our experience back into due relations one with another instead of scattering them in promiscuous confusion, with consequent discomfort and distress. When a man, having turned back from error and sin, makes choice, under the guidance

of conscience, of a right purpose to dominate his life, that purpose becomes the organizing principle of his personal economy, so that impulses are kept in their due places, order succeeds chaos, and moral progress thus becomes possible. And when progress has begun, through purposeful living, even though its starting-point be the gutter, then self-disgust is no longer in place, but is superseded by an increasing and joyous confidence that we shall yet apprehend that to which our deepest nature summons us.

Sin is the transgression of conscience, which may or may not coincide with the transgression of law. Conscience bespeaks the spiritual quality of our being. The sense of right and wrong, upon which it rests, must be educated through training in obedience until mental maturity is attained, and stimulated thereafter by the moral urgency of religious teaching. The sense of guilt presupposes our freedom; and involves, beside an ignoble fear of consequences, a sense of disappointment predicated upon our consciousness of divine potentialities which we have stultified, and of grief predicated upon our conviction of the existence of a personal God whom by our sins we have wounded. To escape from sin and guilt, we ourselves must take the initiative; but, as we do so upon divine invitation, God Himself will help us up and out. He will do this

by forgiving us freely when we turn to Him in penitence, and by reinvigorating our wills when we choose consistent service of deliberate and noble purpose in preference to careless indulgence of impulse and appetite.

Our well-being depends primarily not upon our material fortunes, but upon serenity within, upon being at peace with God and with ourselves. If, therefore, there are those among us who are restless and unhappy, let them search their hearts to see whether perchance the cause of their distress be not their own moral failure—some sin, it may be, not yet acknowledged even to themselves. In that event, let them face that sin candidly, carry it to God, and follow His way out of failure toward restored moral health. We must not forget these vital considerations in any absorption in practical tasks—even of the Church, which would better fail, than prosper at the expense of that higher life which is religion's first concern. For only as the Church ministers to our immortal souls has it any claim upon our support. Above all, then, let us cultivate the moral judgment, and, walking by its light, fulfil our mission as a Church by persuading our fellow-men to do likewise.

XIII

WHAT IS TEMPTATION?

Then was Jesus led up of the spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. —St. Matthew 4:1

The question has often been raised whether Jesus, the sinless man, was actually tempted. There are three reasons for believing that he was. First, the Gospels say so. Second, unless he was actually tempted, he was spared the very crux of the moral struggle of mankind, and consequently cannot be adjudged truly, or at least not fully, a man. Third, Jesus has bequeathed to his Church a memento of the poignancy of his own experience at this point in that pathetic clause of his model prayer, "Lead us not into temptation"—about which it is fair to say that it reflects an appealingly human desire to escape from trial, rather than a deliberate judgment that God ever sends temptation, or, on the other hand, that temptation is an unmitigated ill.

The reason why we are inclined to question the reality of our Lord's temptation is that the actions to which our temptations prompt us are so shameful that we are inclined to be ashamed

of the temptations themselves, as though they could not occur to a truly virtuous soul. But in this opinion I believe not only that we are mistaken, but also that it invites confusion in our thinking and disaster to our moral efforts to regard temptations as in themselves sinful. For we grapple with them successfully, not by trying to deny that they exist in order to save our self-respect, but by confronting them in a candid and matter-of-fact way, and overcoming them face to face. To find out the implications of this observation, which we all know experience confirms, let us consider whence temptation comes and what it is.

Of course, from the standpoint that temptation itself is sinful, an explanation of our Lord's trial in the wilderness exempting him from any inner response to the solicitations of evil, thus regarded as already in a certain measure implying complicity therein, is to the effect that, as our text narrates, he was tempted of the devil—this statement being interpreted as of an impertinent and utterly unwelcome approach by an external agent. But who is the devil? We are entitled to be doubtful as to the actual existence of any disembodied spiritual agent of evil, in view of the fact that of such an agent we have no conclusive evidence in our own experience. This doubt is supported by the further fact that

the theory of a kingdom of maleficent spirits was imported into Hebrew theology from Persian sources, without any essential connection with the distinctive principles of Hebrew faith. There are such clear advantages of picturesque and vivid reference in speaking of evil as though it were personal, and outside of human nature, that we shall doubtless always continue to use the name of the devil as a convenient personification of the dangerous and destructive impulses of our being; but it is worthy of note that, when St. Paul, the first philosopher of the Christian faith, though he also employed this personification at times, came to rationalize its meaning, he was obliged, so to speak, to psychologize, and consequently declared, "The mind of the flesh is enmity against God." We cannot do better than to follow this apostolic precedent, and, for practical purposes at least, identify evil, in its approach to undermine our moral integrity, with the impulses of the carnal mind, that is, of our animal nature.

The temptations which come to us are of many sorts and orders. Some of them are remote from their springs in our instinctive life; some of these remote temptations do indeed partake in some measure of the nature of sin, since they would hardly come if we had not invited them by dwelling perversely in thought upon

the supposititious delights of wrong-doing. Nevertheless, I have never heard of a temptation which could not be directly or indirectly traced back to some urge of our physical organism, or some combination of such urges. But there are no urges of our physical organism which, in the proper time and place, it is not right to indulge. To mention a very simple instance, all decent people abhor a glutton; but gluttony springs from the appetite for food, which must be regularly gratified in moderation if we are to survive. It is because our temptations arise from these innocent causes that I dare to assert that they are not in themselves shameful. A legitimate desire becomes a temptation when it rises in consciousness to demand gratification in an illegitimate way or an unappropriate situation. The desire is not in itself wrong; but it is wrong to yield to it when it conflicts with acknowledged prior obligations.

The human organism is an entity composed of many subordinate elements which have a being of their own relatively independent of the whole. Our bodies are built up of living cells into living organs, each with its peculiar function, and consequently making a special demand upon the whole assemblage of these diverse parts, in which each plays its distinctive rôle. As the solar system is a society of stars, and the nation

is a society of men, so the body is a society of organs. In every society, each of its elements asserts itself, by the law of its own being, above the other elements, and must be held in due relation to the rest by a social control. The control in the solar system is the power of the sun; in the nation, it is the government; in the individual, it is the purposeful will. When this control breaks down, anarchy results. When, on the other hand, this individual self-assertion of the parts ceases, atrophy, or mortification, or paralysis of the whole ensues. Within our own nature, in other words, we are confronted with that task of effecting a counterpoise between individual and general interest which is found everywhere else in our experience. In consequence, so far from temptation being in itself sinful, that man is lacking in such vigor of his component organs as is vital to his own virility who is exempt from temptation. But, to realize that potential strength of his whole being to which the strength of his very temptations bears witness, a man must learn to be master in his own house, holding his impulses down in proper relation to one another instead of indulging them at the expense of his corporate well-being.

The practice of this self-control, which involves the overmastering of importunate impulses for the sake of their harmonious interplay,

can only be achieved by holding firmly to a rational aim based upon one's relations, beyond his own person, with the rest of the universe. The aim of this order most generally held has in view only the advantage of the individual, during the period of his natural life. It forbids indulgence of any appetite at the expense of physical health, or of social repute, or of fundamental financial security. This is the utilitarian type of morality, to which every man not altogether a fool renders at least the tribute of lip-service. Another name for this ethic is the shrewder selfishness—for it subordinates selfish impulses of the coarser and more immediate sort to considerations of selfish advantages in the long run. This is the ethic which the world is agreed to regard as reasonable morality. It is worthy of note, in passing, that even this utilitarian morality, applied with rigorous logic, would, in our time at least, of an extremely complex civilization with closely interlocking factors, forbid violence among individuals and warfare among nations.

But he who thinks at all about the setting of human life soon discovers that we are environed not only by our associations and interests close at hand, but also by all time and all space, the whole infinite concatenation of causes and effects which constitutes the universe. You and I live

in a city; our city is in a state; our state is in the United States; the United States is in the western hemisphere; the western hemisphere is on the earth; the earth belongs to the solar system; the solar system—what is its environment, thus ultimately ours, but the whole starry heaven? We live in the twentieth century; the twentieth century is one of a limited series demarked upon a succession of thousands, perhaps of millions of centuries, already passed in the history of our planet. Our planet is a young sprout in the wide celestial gardens of eternity. How long our planet will endure into the inscrutable future no man knows or can estimate; how long the skies will endure after our planet is burned or frozen into death, no man can dream. What, then, is our time but a glinting ripple in the measureless flow of incalculable years? In this perspective of unbounded space and endless time, our true environment, we feel, though we cannot prove, that there is meaning. That is the beginning of faith; for meaning implies intention, and intention is a personal attribute, wherefore our sense of a significance infusing all things inevitably involves a conviction that a supreme Personality indwells the whole. But if this inconceivably larger environment of ours have meaning, such as our immediate environment derives from the purposes of

collective humanity, then to this larger environment also we must adjust ourselves purposefully, overmastering our mere physical impulses to direct them in harmony with the universal aim. What this universal aim may be in the large we cannot define; but of its kind we Christians believe that we are fulfilling a primary human intuition in declaring that it corresponds with the character of our Master, the finite mirror of the infinite—his character, of such goodness as by its quality dwarfs into utter insignificance all considerations of mere selfishness, as does the universal aim by its magnitude. So to master one's impulses as to bring one's conduct into line with this higher reason, based upon the faith that the totality of being has meaning like the character of Jesus, constitutes the morality which appertains to religion, in contrast with mere utilitarianism. Putting it succinctly, one may state the principle of this religious ethic in some such words as these: we are to do only such things as are consonant with our true and ultimate nature as children of God, destined to dwell with Him through all eternity.

A temptation, then, is any urge to action which does not accord in a given situation with our divine estate. How shall we decide among our impulses, and reduce them to their proper place, especially when they happen to conflict?

Let us investigate this question by examining an imaginary case in which two impulses are present, both of which cannot be indulged, and neither of which can be indulged with propriety. Let us suppose that a small man of choleric disposition is attacked, or otherwise provoked to physical encounter, by "a mighty man of valor" —in Old Testament phrase—larger than he.

He is likely to be confused by the simultaneous emergence of two instincts: one, that of pugnacity, to give as good as he got; the other, that of self-preservation, to run away. Obviously he cannot do both. If he does either, calamity is likely to follow. For, if he fights back, he will probably be soundly punished; and, if he runs away, he will incur self-contempt and invite the jeers of all observers. If he can gain a moment to think, perhaps he will decide somehow between these two impulses; put away the one which he has determined to deny, after acknowledging and honestly estimating it; act upon the other, and take the consequences. The external consequences will in that event no doubt be unfortunate; but at least he will suffer no internal complications, for he has (by hypothesis) gauged both impulses candidly before dismissing one of them.

But now suppose that the impulse he refuses to gratify is one which he feels shame even to

experience. Then he is likely to shove it out of sight, so to speak, with his face averted—not even acknowledging to himself that such an impulse has been present in his mind. That course —to which we are invited by the fallacious notion that temptation in itself is sinful—constitutes what is called "repression," and becomes the kernel of a subjective complex, a sore spot deep down in the mind, which may work all sorts of havoc; for which one is entirely unable to account for the reason that one succeeds in actually forgetting, so far as the conscious mind is concerned, an impulse thus repulsed with horror. If our choleric little man repressed his instinct to belligerency I am not sure just what would happen to him; something unpleasant certainly: perhaps an inclination to attribute violent motives (such as the one he had repressed) to everybody in every situation. If, on the other hand, he repressed his instinct to run away, he would almost certainly become in some degree a victim of what during the war we called "shell shock"—which was nothing more nor less than a bad case of blue funk, indignantly crowded down into the unconscious by its victim, and vindictively working itself out in derangements of his organic functions. Shell shock was by no means a new thing in the Great War, despite the novelty of the term, and of the explanation

of this phenomenon which modern psychology has afforded us. It is at least as old as the Battle of Marathon; for Herodotus tells of an Athenian warrior in that bloody fray who, though he fought doughtily, lost his sight permanently on that day without having received a single blow from the enemy. The man's own account of how this came about—offered with innocent frankness, because he had successfully refused to own to himself that he had been afraid—was that his vision departed at the moment when he saw the man next to him in line felled by a huge Persian of horrific aspect.

But if our choleric little man were honest enough with himself to acknowledge in his own soul without shame that two impulses were present in his mind at the moment—to fight back and to run away—and were unwilling to act upon either of them, the only other course open to him would be to spar for time and attempt conciliation. If his motive in doing this were just to escape wounds and ignominy—that is, the utilitarian ethic—he might persuade his would-be antagonist to regard him indulgently and patronizingly, somewhat to his own humiliation; or, failing in his attempt at conciliation, he would wish for the rest of his life that he had either run away or fought back. If, however, he chose this course from a sincere conviction

that any other would be wrong, since he and his adversary alike were children of God, obligated to preserve and extend divine good will irrespective of their personal interests, then he would either win his would-be antagonist to a new comprehension of the dignity of moral principle in human conduct; or, if the antagonist proved recalcitrant, he would himself have, to console him while he recovered from his injuries, the conviction that he had suffered as a martyr for conscience, and had preserved his self-respect and the favor of God by heeding, though under severe penalty, the requirements of righteousness.

Not only was Jesus really tempted; but every man must be tempted, who has impulses strong enough to enable him to serve the right effectively so long as they are held in control by an aim adequate to his status as a child of God. There is no shame or sin in being tempted; for a temptation is simply an untimely urge to action which would be legitimate and honorable upon its own proper occasion. If, however, we master our impulses just for the sake of our own selfish advantage, that achievement of merely utilitarian morality will betoken no more than the raising of the carnal mind to a higher level, serving the devil in subtler and mightier form. As men of faith, we are to master our

impulses from the standpoint of our relation with the infinite meaningful universe—the spirit of God—a relation the conviction of which constitutes the ultimate ground of the moral consciousness, and of religion.

XIV

HUNGER

And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he afterward hungered. And the tempter came and said unto him, If thou art the Son of God, command that these stones become bread. But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

—St. Matthew 4:2-4

That at the beginning of his ministry Jesus had to pass through a period of severe moral trial it is reasonable to suppose. But the account of his threefold trial in the Gospels presents puzzling features to our understanding. While in general the allegorizing of biblical statements is a process fraught with peril to sound interpretation, yet in such a passage as this we are in effect obliged to adopt an allegorical explanation, for the reason that, whatever the objective truth may have been, it is strictly incomprehensible, from the standpoint of our own experience, save as its terms are regarded as a stenographic symbolical report of the typical temptations which our Lord had to overcome. So, in discussing the first of these

testings of his moral strength, we must take the tempter to be a personification of evil; Jesus' hunger to stand for physical appetite in general; and the power which he is supposed to have had, or to have supposed that he had, of turning stones into bread, as designating that spiritual power, capable of and intended for direction upon eternal ends, which is the distinctive attribute of human nature as derived from the nature of God. The temptation here represented is, then, to degrade man's spiritual capacities for the service of his physical appetites as their main objective.

It is important to grasp this meaning clearly. For otherwise we are likely to suppose that the satisfaction of hunger is itself here viewed as illegitimate. And of course that is absurd. If bread had been available in the regular way, Jesus would doubtless have partaken of it cheerfully at the expiration of his long fast. To suppose that any physical appetite is of itself, and in due subordination to the higher aims of life, evil, and to be withstood and thwarted, is to depart from the sane teachings of the Gospel into dangerous extremes of contempt and hatred for the body. That many Christians have taken this extreme position is no justification for the position itself; rather, their error is to be regretted, as misrepresenting the Gospel, which inculcates

no hostility to the valid interests of a full and well-rounded life in this world, but rather invites to normal living at its most complete, with reasonable provision for all the aspects of man's being. It is the raising of the body to usurped ascendency over the spirit, rather than the satisfaction of bodily needs in proper relation to spiritual concerns, which is here in question.

Before proceeding to the discussion of this theme, there are two prefatory remarks which I deem it advisable to make: First, the subject is obviously a delicate one. It is susceptible of harsh and coarse treatment. Perhaps some Christian teachers would seek unenviable publicity by disregarding the canons of good taste upon this subject. I ask you, however, to believe and note that I am endeavoring to treat it with correct reserve, leaving it to you to make many applications and elaborations which it would be of questionable propriety for me to indicate.

Second, I shall have to speak of certain trends which are conspicuous in our time. But please do not imagine that I am speaking in the vein of a Jeremiad, or a splenetic diatribe, as though our time were worse than other periods of history. Indeed, I hold that on the whole it is better. But, since the elemental impulses of humanity do not change with the improvement

of social usages designed to regulate their display, the same wrongs are to be observed in general conduct today as in earlier periods. Perhaps they are more clearly to be seen now than at some times in the past, for the reason that we are much more frank than were our Puritan fathers. This frankness, however, is by no means wholly to be condemned. I doubt whether there is more evil now than formerly; but I am confident that there is much less hypocrisy, and that, other things being equal, is a point gained.

Now we all know, from painful and tormenting experience, how powerful are the urges of our physical organism; how hard they are to master when they demand, as often they do, without consideration for our ulterior interests, immediate obedience to their passionate imperative. And likewise we all know that many yield this obedience, to their own grave disadvantage in many ways. Our purpose now is to fortify our own resolution against the debasement of spiritual energies to physical ends, by noting what irreparable damage to the integrity of our being is wrought by thoughtless indulgence of the lower self.

I shall have only a word to say about the desires of the flesh at their lowest level and in their crudest form. I have always believed that, while

withstanding vice vigorously in our own lives, we ought to be content to take for granted without curious exploration those lugubrious and deplorable spheres of living, the "underworld," in which men and women seem content to be vicious and bestial. We have to take so much of the good side of life for granted, that we may well compensate ourselves for this necessity by taking all we can of its evil side for granted also. We all know that in city streets and country lanes alike are to be found the wanton, the drunken and the drugged. Some of us have been obliged to observe at first hand the awful consequences of vicious living; most of us, I presume, have had to contemplate this tragic abyss in our own hypothetical future, as we trembled and sought to maintain our balance on its brink. The thing to note is that the wild horses of passion, given free rein, precipitate those whom they drag after them into dark destruction of all that gives personality intrinsic worth; while these same wild horses, harnessed to a stubborn will for righteousness, become tremendous instruments of good. Let no man make excuse for his crimes, that his passions are strong; for no man ever achieved genuine virtue whose passions were not strong, but held in firm control.

Carnal appetites also assert themselves, however, in ways less noxious and disgusting than

vice, but not less criminally inimical to the immortal nature of man. I am thinking now of the seductions of soft and easy living, the pleasures of the table and the armchair. Many a man who would scorn to pursue such a course as would land him in the gutter is rendered as void of spirituality as a vegetable and brought to an early grave by the eminently respectable and genial sins of overeating and padded inertia. I never see a man whose skeleton is deep-seated—to employ a euphemism I have recently acquired for the description of the excessively plump—without being skeptical about his soul; though sometimes, to be sure, his corpulence is pathological, and my skepticism is unwarranted. Fortunately, of late, two beneficent fads have been making their way to general acceptance, which a man enamored of the Greek ideal of perfect physical condition must hail with rejoicing: diet and exercise.

Diet and exercise, however, while they make for grace, vigor and longevity, are by no means guarantees of spiritual-mindedness. For carnal desires may also be, and frequently are, indulged in more refined and insidious ways, less detrimental in their physical consequences, but quite as subversive of the soul's welfare as vice, gluttony and sloth.

Three of these ways for titillating the nerves,

soiling the mind and stimulating unwholesome fancies are especially conspicuous among thoughtless people nowadays. First, a brazen immodesty, which has to some extent won conventional endorsement. Whether they like the responsibility or not, the women have in their custody the moral standards of the race. Two indications that they take this responsibility with unseemly lightness are afforded by the extravagant reduction of women's costume in recent years, and their flaunting of cosmetics. I am aware that the present styles for women are hygienically an improvement upon the street-sweeping sartorial devices which were in vogue twenty-five years ago, and that the discreet use of artificial color is unobjectionable save to an exaggerated prudery. Nor would it be just or sensible to bring any indictment of indiscretion or questionable motives against women who follow the current modes with judgment and moderation. But we have all observed how unprecedentedly frequent even among women otherwise thoroughly respectable are the extremes of these trends, the motive for which can only be the indulgence of a silly carnal vanity, seeking the morbid scrutiny and disrespectful admiration of casual observers.

Another form of immodesty which it pains people who want to be broad-minded to admit

is that which obtains in much recent dancing. I have never been able to hold with severe and censorious critics that dancing of itself is wrong. It seems to me to be natural, innocent and beautiful, and to afford training in physical grace which all should covet. But obviously that cannot truthfully be said of certain forms of dancing which are now to be observed in almost every ballroom, and which it would be beneath one's dignity to comment upon further.

Now immodesty is a form of social daring which is inspired by the carnal mind, and involves such a degradation of the spiritual energies of those who indulge in it as to be destructive of the essential reserves of a dignified self-respect, and of that sense of the ultimate sanctity of human personality which underlies virtue in all its forms.

Another of these subtly seductive tendencies to carnal indulgence is the love of sensation which is dragging down the tone of the press and of fiction. Newspaper editors claim that they cannot control the moral quality of their columns: for profits depend upon advertising; advertising is based upon circulation; circulation is built upon giving people what they want; and what people want nowadays is stories of crime and divorce, with as few as possible of the gruesome or erotic details omitted. The result is

that the important news of the day is hardly worth pursuing into the corners to which it has been relegated, and that many of the sober-minded and upright confine their perusal of the newspapers to glancing at the headlines, and read of current events only in weekly or monthly periodicals, which maintain a certain minimum, at least, of decency. Paralleling this poisoning of the press is that type of realism, falsely so-called, which stocks our news-stands with lurid and shocking periodicals crammed with nauseous sex-stuff, and our bookstalls with literary junk of like character which it is an insult to letters to dignify with a binding. Where is the candidly lewd paper-back novel of yesteryear? It now wears the disguise of a two-dollar "best seller." And here we behold that spiritual energy which goes in quest of truth, eternal and glorious, damned and deflected into channels of prurience, pandering to an ignoble craving for vicarious vice.

The third of these tendencies is the insatiable appetite of the masses—including the "classes," I fear—for amusement, entertainment, what is ludicrously misnamed "a good time." From watching the ebb and flow of human tides in our streets, the exits and entrances of many homes supposedly of high ideals and cultivated standards, one is almost forced to conclude that most

souls are now running a temperature, diseased with a fever for gaiety. Always to be going somewhere, talking with some one, seeing some new thing—what is this but a pursuit of the immediate satisfaction of the moment, basically akin to carnal sins of the most revolting order? And where do we go, and what do we hear and see? We go to garish restaurants, to eat in time to the blaring cadences of barbaric jazz, and thence to movies, to see empty-faced screen favorites moping, mowing and posturing in mock heroics, in sumptuously depicted plots and situations which to an intelligent high school student would be commonplace, vapid and unconvincing, but which are usually redeemed in the eyes of varnished vulgarity by the circumstance, hardly inadvertent, that they are distinctly risqué. This is art, the appreciation of beauty, as the multitudes cherish it in our time!

In all these matters we have to do with a degrading of spiritual energies from their spiritual ends to carnal objectives, more or less direct. To withstand the temptation which these trends convey, as Jesus withstood the tempter, we need, first, a renewed appreciation of our spiritual energies themselves. That we are able to think, to reflect, to decide between right and wrong, to rejoice in beauty, and to love our kind and our heavenly Father with sacrificial devotion, if we

will—these capacities bring us in touch with an eternal world, qualify us to grow into new and higher states of being, and are the evidence in us of a divine quality which destines us to immortality. When once we apprehend the fact and all it implies, how scornful we must become of behavior merely animal, of pursuit of merely and immediately passing satisfactions!

Second, we need a fresh appraisal of the body. The body with its instincts is designed to be our instrument of self-expression upon our present plane of being. As a servant it is the most intricate, competent, and admirable device within our ken, worthy of the creative designing of a beneficent and omnipotent Artificer who has brought it to its present approximate perfection through countless ages of evolutionary advance. As a master, however, the body is as out of due relations as would be a machine in control of a man. A man in a runaway motor car knows that destruction lies ahead. A man who lets his body run away with him may be equally sure of the same thing. So we must bring the body into subjection. We must keep it in its place. We must use it instead of being used by it.

That is the reason why ascetic practices, deliberate curbings of lawful desires for mastery's sake, have value. Ascetic renunciation as an end in itself involves the absurd notion that hunger,

thirst, and other like physical frustrations, are states of grace. Jesus never accepted or endorsed that depressing vagary of the diseased religious imagination, but, as he himself said, "came eating and drinking." But the word "asceticism" comes from a Greek original which means physical exercise or discipline, and is commonly used in connection with athletics: it is the discipline of the playing-field and the training-table, making the body the servant of the will, with stern control of its insurgent appetites in appropriate season, yet with perfect attention to its authentic needs, as an engineer supplies fuel, oil, and intervals of inactivity to the motor under his control. Asceticism in that sense we need to practice, enchaining impulse and imagination and making them the slaves of our pursuit of eternal values—the true, the beautiful, and the good, which inhere and are subsumed in God, fellowship with whom is the highest good and the true end of man.

If we will have the courage to stand out against every importunate inclination rooted however remotely in bodily appetite, and to focus our spiritual powers upon this spiritual end, we shall, beginning with little acts of self-denial and mounting with our accruing strength to complete control of all untimely passions, enjoy a sense of victory, of spiritual resilience, of capac-

ity and of anticipation which will prepare us for achievement of our destiny and calling as God's children, as our Lord achieved his destiny and fulfilled the call of God upon the indispensable preliminary condition of mastering his passions and harnessing them to the valid aims of his radiant and triumphant spiritual manhood.

XV

SELF-SEEKING

Then the devil taketh him into the holy city; and he set him on the pinnacle of the temple and saith unto him, If thou art the Son of God, cast thyself down; for it is written,
He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and,
On their hands they shall bear thee up,
Lest haply thou dash thy foot against a stone.
Jesus said unto him, Again it is written, Thou shalt not make trial of the Lord thy God.

—St. Matthew 4:5-7

Our Lord's first temptation was to self-indulgence. He had next to outface the impulse to self-glorification. To cast himself down from the pinnacle of the temple into the most crowded area of Jerusalem before the astonished eyes of throngs of spectators would have inaugurated his ministry with a sensational act which must inevitably have given its tone of conceited self-exhibition to all his subsequent contacts with the public. That his transportation by the devil to this surprising eminence was a flight of his imagination we may assume. That Jesus could actually have precipitated himself from such an eminence to the ground without injury we cannot help doubting. Nevertheless, the meaning

of this report of the second temptation as a symbolical account of a typical incitation to base conduct is clear.

Self-seeking is a more subtle but not less dangerous type of selfishness than self-indulgence. And the spring of all self-seeking is the impulse to assert one's own personality and make it conspicuous; in one way or another, to "show off." Well is this impulse called vanity; for vanity means emptiness or hollowness, a fitting synonym for folly. The difference between a wise man and a fool is that, whereas every man has to contend with the temptation to vain display, the wise man contends manfully and overcomes, while the fool lets the battle go by default and indulges this impulse, at the expense of his judgment, his sense of humor, and his modesty.

The psychological ground of vanity is the inevitable fact, inherent in self-consciousness, that each man seems to himself to be the center of the world. If a mosquito had a soul, he would suppose that the skies turned about his sting; whereas, in truth, he would be, as every one of us is, only the center of his own world, a subjective distortion of reality. There are two ways of correcting this perverse self-centered viewpoint. One is to find oneself obliged, by the competing pretensions of the more powerful, to give way, sullenly, before their more successful

self-assertion, and to make provisional allowance —under coercion, as it were, and with protest— for the superiority of others' interests to one's own. The other and better way is through faith in God, in whom by definition the whole universe has its being, so that every finite self is recognized as only one among innumerable other finite selves, graded in a hierarchy ordered and governed by the Supreme Being, the authentic Central Self, whose viewpoint alone is therefore ultimately valid, and the standard by which each man must gauge his conduct and interests instead of by his own transient personal prejudice.

Illustrations of self-glorification are always before us, but are especially conspicuous in those callings which are transacted largely in the public eye. Every athletic coach knows how fatal it is to successful team action to have a star performer on a team who is given to grandstand plays. Likewise, there are actors who will have no artists of ability comparable with their own in their companies, and who do not hesitate to degrade great drama as a mere vehicle for their own mannerisms and egotistical affectations, to be played out under the spotlight. There are preachers who recruit crowds of the curious by sensational topics, sensationally discussed, and who use the sacred rostrum of the Church, not for its designed purpose as a source of saving

indoctrination in divine truth, but as a setting for the exploitation of their own personalities, to win the plaudits of the thoughtless. Of such a preacher I once heard it caustically said, "His discourse was thin, but it was evident that he wanted us to admire the way he wore his hair." And there are politicians who, in place of championing straightforwardly, and at whatever risk to their own careers, the political views in which they profoundly believe, use the issues they espouse, instead, as means to their own prominence, and advancement; never espouse an issue, indeed, save with their tongues in their cheeks; and thus are content to be mere demagogues.

But the same inclination is quite as dominant, though less conspicuously so, in many whose work is done privately. The gravest menace to human progress is the prostitution of energies which should minister to the general welfare to the aggrandizement of the individuals who exercise them and who through them seek not to serve, but either to win admiration by self-display or to make themselves feared for their power.

To seek admiration is unwise, even from the standpoint of enlightened self-interest. For, if one fail to achieve it, one's bid for it becomes ridiculous and invites derision. And, if one gain it, unwilling applause will always be tinctured

with envy. But envy is a social poison, detrimental to all in the group in which it exists, including the person admired. Moreover, it incites those who feel it to harsh and hostile criticism behind the back of him before whose face only praise is uttered.

Again, to make oneself powerful in order to be feared is to enjoy, indeed, while the power lasts, a flattering sense of importance, a glow of rather mean-spirited self-confidence. But the man who makes himself feared by others than the enemies of righteousness—who invites the truckling subservience of underlings by using success and influence to back up a stern and overbearing manner—sows seeds of venomous hatred in the hearts of all whom he oppresses. So he is likely to incur downfall when their antagonism finds, at some moment of relaxed vigilance or diminished reserves on his part, a favorable opportunity for throwing off the yoke they have unwillingly borne.

Thus to utilize life's opportunities for self-glorification is indeed a vain and treacherous course. On higher moral ground, it is open to the further objection that it betokens the lack of a decent respect for the business itself, whatever it may be, which is thus misdirected, and for its legitimate function as one element in the interplay of the creative forces of human destiny.

It is a dreadful thing to limit one's own usefulness, the purpose for which God has put one in the world, by putting oneself forward instead of forwarding one's work. There is, moreover, no real happiness to be found in work done with an ulterior motive. The only way to enjoy the daily routine is to transact it for its own sake, because it is worth doing, and with the feeling that it is more important and its results will be more lasting than one's narrow and selfish aims.

Our Lord decided this question for himself once for all at the outset of his ministry. He was called upon, however, to reaffirm that decision many times; for repeatedly his critics, and some half-convinced friends, demanded of him a "sign"—that is, some sensational deed to compel their credence—in ratification of his supernal claims. No sign, however, would he give them. He did indeed heal the sick and raise the dead; but, when he did so, it was not that men might know that he was the Messiah, but that sick people might be well, and bereaved people might find comfort. He chose to give himself to the principle in which he believed instead of using that principle for his own temporal profit. So he became in the sight of men, as he was in nature, the very incarnation of the principle of divine redemptive love; and, while fated by the opposition of dull and wicked men to a seeming

defeat in his own generation, he has achieved, through this identification of his personality with a cause greater than any personality, the name of the greatest hero of the race, and has demonstrated a moral quality which authorizes us with every support in reason to acclaim him as the eternal Son of God.

His decision at this point ought to govern our decisions in like matters. Our personalities are, so far as this earth is concerned, of only passing moment at best. Whatever fame we win, whatever power we exercise, by vain self-assertion, must be presently relinquished, and will surely and shortly thereafter be forgotten. But our personalities may achieve real distinction by voluntary subordination to transpersonal ends—by becoming the vehicles of ennobling selfless service to human welfare and for the glory of God. That is the principle, then, which we ought to choose as governing and motivating all our participation in the world's business.

If we do thus deliberately choose to subordinate self to the principle of service, instead of exploiting our opportunities for service for the gratification of our futile and insensate vanity, we shall find ready access for the high values which we promote to many hearts which would be closed against our self-seeking; and we shall achieve an intrinsic dignity among our fellow-

men—needing no buttresses of pretension and display, because it connotes an immortal quality of our nature—not the bubble reputation, but the substance of character, which we shall carry on with us to other spheres after we leave this world behind.

The center of the world does not lie in any one of us. So long as we suppose that it does, we shall be mere creatures of time and space, curious, ephemeral biological phenomena, neither worth remembering nor capable of accomplishing ends worth conserving. But the center of the world lies in God. If we will but remember that, and correct the egocentric view to which self-consciousness invites us by this act of faith in Him whose interests alone run with His laws supreme throughout the universe, we shall fulfill our business on the earth with lasting credit to ourselves and gain to His cause, and shall be recognized and remembered as positive psychic factors in the progress of humankind toward the Kingdom of God.

XVI

NO COMPROMISE

Again, the devil taketh him unto an exceeding high mountain, and showeth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; and he said unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me. Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve. Then the devil leaveth him; and behold, angels came and ministered unto him.

—St. Matthew 4:8-11

Let us again remind ourselves that it is not necessary, in order to learn the lessons of this narrative of the temptations of our Lord at the beginning of his ministry, to accept it as a literal transcript of fact. It is legitimate, and indeed from the standpoint of our experience necessary, to interpret this narrative allegorically. It is quite possible that these temptations, in the form they here assume, came to Jesus at this period as dreams; for the figures and events which occur in them have a decided semblance of dream symbolism. This third and last temptation represents the question, arising in the Master's mind, as it arises sooner or later in all other minds, Does the end justify the means? And his ver-

dict upon this point in casuistry is an emphatic "No," which may well guide us to a like decision when we likewise are tempted to compromise our principles for the sake of achieving some right and reasonable aim which we entertain.

This temptation must indeed have been a strong one. For it offered to our Lord the very thing he sought; namely, world-mastery. Jesus came into the world in order to achieve dominion over all the kingdoms thereof. It is a mistake to suppose that there was anything diffident or shrinking about his attitude toward the empires of the earth. On the contrary, he was a man of towering ambition, who would and could be satisfied with nothing short of supremacy. It was to win this supremacy that God had sent him here. The final goal of Providence in history is not democracy, but the Kingdom of Christ: an autocracy of righteousness resting upon the willing obedience of all God's subjects, toward which democracy is only an advanced step.

Jesus was confronted, in this dream, with full satisfaction of his ambition, provided he would accept it on condition of a purely private transaction, a merely formal and momentary obeisance to the power of evil. No one need ever know that this act of reverence had taken place. This element of secrecy must have played no small part in the force of the temptation. For

it is an instinctive view of us all that guilt and public shame are, if not synonymous, at least correlative. It is hard for us to realize, and it was probably just as hard for Jesus, on first thought, that sin is sin, compromise is compromise, whether any one save the responsible agent know about it or not. But Jesus, like all prudent men, was in the habit of postponing action until he had thought twice. And on second thought, of course, he saw through this notion that wrong is innocuous so long as it remains hidden.

By doing homage to the devil, Jesus was assured that he might achieve at once the world-dominion which he sought. So he would have saved a great deal of time. It may easily have appeared to him at first that the world would have immensely benefited if his reign as the divine vicegerent of our planet were to commence without delay, instead of being brought about only through thousands of years of dark struggle and suffering. This consideration, too, must have made much of the weight of the temptation. We all have a liking for short-cuts to success, whether the success we have in mind be selfish or, as in Jesus' case, magnanimous. But there are short-cuts legitimate and illegitimate. To illustrate, in solving a difficult mathematical problem there are two ways of finding out the answer with a minimum of effort. The first is

to use upon the problem the briefest mathematical formula applicable to it, previously proved and understood by the reckoner; that is legitimate. The second way is by looking up the answer in the back of the book; that is illegitimate. Time saved in the wrong way ultimately proves to be a loss rather than a gain. Surely a Kingdom of God set up by grace of the devil, however swiftly, would not have been so good for the world, even during the ages saved by this device, as a Kingdom of God slowly but surely established over human hearts by the persuasions of divine love.

We may be confident that our Lord was fully aware of the perils involved in clandestine arrangements, and of the evil of achieving his ends by means which gainsaid and defeated it in advance. But there were two other reasons which must have taken prime rank among his motives for rejecting this solicitation of evil. First, the devil promised him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory thereof; but the devil would not keep his promise. He would not if he could; for, as Jesus said, "He is a liar, and the father of it." He could not if he would; for, though it is a favorite maxim of moral pessimism that the devil is the prince of this world—that is, that evil motives dominate human actions—yet that maxim is a fallacy. The man who deliberately

wills evil is a grotesque exception to the rule of human nature. It is stupidity, not malignity, which is the root of most of the ills that flesh is heir to. And so, in every instance, hopes grounded upon the fair promises of guile prove finally deceptive. Sooner or later he who builds his career upon the shrewd subtleties of dishonest design will fall back down the ladder of intrigue by which he has climbed—on the analogy of Jesus' stern dictum, "They that take the sword shall perish by the sword."

Second, if our Lord had consented to accept world-dominion on the devil's terms, and the devil had kept his promise, it would not have been our Lord who entered into this wide domain. That is to say, he would have been a changed Jesus, no longer the incarnation of God, but a fallen angel whose light was turned to darkness. For he would have lost his self-respect. Even if nobody else knew of his bargain with Satan, he would have known; and that knowledge would have proved his undoing. As of any good man it can be said, "His strength was as the strength of ten, because his heart was pure," so of any man who has voluntarily lowered his standard it can be said with equal justice that his strength is turned to weakness because his conscience is wounded. Without self-respect, Jesus could not have won the love of

his subjects; without the love of his subjects, Jesus would have had to become a Cæsar instead of a Christ, to maintain his authority, and the world would have been worse rather than better for his presence in it.

Was there in the actual experience of Jesus anything to bear out this dream of rapid success through compromise with evil? I have always believed that this temptation met him repeatedly in extremely practical ways. For Jesus had the gift of magnetism, which drew crowds to him, without very clear reference to the tenor of his teachings, while, at the same time, we find that he was socially acceptable to the privileged. It therefore requires no great strain of the imagination to suppose that, had he been willing to modify his utterances at some inconspicuous points, to make them more acceptable to the privileged classes among his people, and had he sought, for selfish advantage, the favor of the chief priests, he might with relatively little difficulty have exploited his genius to become the recognized hero and champion of Jewish national politics. Had a man of Jesus' temperament and intellectual capacity gained such a status, it is not easy to set limits to his possible power and influence over world affairs. For we must remember that in the opening decades of the first century the Augustan régime was still new, and

consequently without traditional support, at Rome—with about the degree of political security which appertained to the Second Empire while it was in power in France. A successful Palestinian uprising, directed by a tribune of the people who could universalize the tenets of the faith of Israel in terms attractive and not too exigent for a world tired of paganism and with an eager appetite for exotic religious novelties, might conceivably have overturned the established order, and placed its leader upon the throne of the Cæsars, as the French Revolution was to place a Corsican adventurer upon the throne of Charlemagne. And a man like Jesus —for we must remember that his was an extraordinarily acute mind—may well have comprehended this remote yet putatively realizable possibility when, as again and again occurred, he was solicited to identify his cause with the nationalist aspirations of the Jews. But to these solicitations, as to the devil's approach in the weird dream of the wilderness, he replied with a resolute and unhesitating refusal to compromise the truth that was in him.

Instead of following the broad highway of double-dealing down into the fertile and smiling valley of worldly splendor and authority, Jesus chose, with his eyes open to all that the choice portended, to mount the hilly footpath that led

to Calvary. So his earthly life was blotted out in that darkness of ignominy which overshadowed the cruel cross. But on that cross he set forth more effectively than in any words the love —the yearning, impassioned, sacrificial solicitude for the relief and deliverance of his fellow-men —which was the only principle by which he could, consistently with his own convictions and his knowledge of his divine mission, set about to win for himself, and to administer, that dominion of the world which he sought. And the greatest miracle of history is that the centuries have reversed the negative verdict of his own time upon Jesus' career, so that, by virtue of this very abnegation of self-seeking for the sake of unsullied loyalty to his heavenly Father, he has ever since been coming into his own; nineteen ceuturies after his death, millions upon millions of earth's denizens acclaim and adore him as their earthly King and their eternal Savior, and, observing the signs of his expanding and penetrating sway over the motives and institutions of humanity, believe themselves justified in saying: "The night of earth's rebellion is far spent; the day of Christ's Kingdom is at hand."

All through life you and I have to confront a temptation, like this which came to our Lord, to gain the ends we seek by means of which we must be ashamed. It confronts us first in our school

days. How shall we win good grades, and the successive diplomas which are passports to enlarging spheres of usefulness and influence? Why not "bluff" and cajole our teachers, and "crib," instead of doing honest work to master the subjects which our teachers profess? Thousands there are who do so; and sometimes they "get by" much better, for the moment, than those who pursue their studies with unbending rectitude. But what do they gain? Grades and diplomas. What do they miss? The knowledge which these awards are supposed to attest. They cheat themselves of that vigorous and effective mental training which the schools are designed to afford, and which they need for grappling with the difficulties of life. And they acquire, too frequently, a habit of sliding along on the surface of things, guiding their course by mere puerile tricks, which stays with them through the years, and makes them not partners but annoying clutterers and hindrances in the world's business, despised by all sensible people, who see through them.

Again, we are tempted to make friends by lowering our moral standards to the level of the carelessness of many whose good will we seek to purchase, and by flattering them—by telling them what they want to hear instead of the truth. But even those whom we try thus to conciliate

will be wary of us if we do this, for they can hardly fail to note that we do not ring true. And, even if they did fail to note it, they could not be our friends, for the reason that we could not be their friends: friendship, in the true sense of the term, as contrasted with mere amiable superficial acquaintance, is grounded in reciprocal sincerity, and he who compromises sincerity forswears friendship.

Further, we may be tempted to achieve business success by any underhanded means available, provided only that we stay just far enough within the law to keep out of jail. The realm of commerce and finance affords countless opportunities for profitable sleight-of-hand. But these are mean opportunities, for they arise incidentally to the fact that business is based upon credit; that is, upon pre-supposition of good faith on the part of all participants. When one considers the vital rôle in human welfare played by industry in our time, one cannot doubt but that to seek success in business is legitimate, and compatible with the highest moral aspirations. But to buy success at the cost of self-corruption, is to incur the hatred and contempt of one's victims, and to plant in one's own heart seeds of apprehension and self-distrust which spring up like weeds to stifle every sturdy growth of peace and joy, so that a man who ceases to be honor-

able in order to become rich loses the very flavor of his riches. Many a poor man dines more happily upon a crust than do some rich men upon a banquet.

By contrast with the ease of attainment to which a facile treachery to conscience often ministers, the gait by which clean and honest people go forward toward their goal seems dreadfully slow. Probably every one of us has had occasion at some time to sense this contrast keenly and mutinously. But the patience which this slower route requires is compensated by the fact that, while we follow it, we remain our true selves, instead of changing for the worse; and, when the goal is reached, we have won it in such a way as to be likely to hold it, and to be able to enjoy it without remorse or shame.

But suppose a man seeking his goal by right means fail to achieve it, while his neighbor, content to employ any means available, wins through to pompous place and pride? That often happens; and it would be a just occasion for bitterness, if it were the goal that counted. But no goal in this world counts for itself in the sight of God, or of right-minded men. What counts is that we should be going forward toward some goal, of such a sort as to be the earthly symbol of an ideal. So long as we are pursuing an ideal, we are growing character; and that is what

our life here is for. So soon as the ideal aspect of our goal is clouded or eclipsed, so that it loses its symbolic value and becomes merely an earthly gain to be pursued for its own sake, the growth of character ceases, and its deterioration begins. And that, and that alone, is failure, grim and terrible beyond offset or diminution of its scandal and sting by any fleeting show of worldly gain.

It is a fine and stirring example which our Lord has given us in preferring failure with honor to tainted success. God, who strengthened him to withstand this ordeal and keep his conscience clear, will stand by us likewise, if we too will determine, with far-sighted courage, to make no compromise ever, but to play the game according to the rules, to seek our ends by means no man can impugn, and to be content to wait upon God's time of fulfillment for our hopes, even though the way be long and the discipline be tedious by which we approach the coronation of our labors.

XVII

NON-RESISTANCE

Thinkest thou that I cannot beseech my Father, and he will even now send me more than twelve legions of angels?
—St. Matthew 26:53

Suppose Jesus was right. Suppose he could have summoned more legions of angels than he had had disciples before Judas' defection. Why did he not do so? Why did he submit to the cross, instead of whelming his enemies in ruin with the hosts of the Lord God of Battles?

But suppose he was wrong. Suppose there are no angels, and miracles never happen. Were these words the pathetic bravado of a man in a corner? Was Jesus whistling to keep up his courage? But he was in this corner by his own choice. Whether or not he could have summoned angels to his rescue, the fact is beyond question that he need never have required rescue if he had chosen to evade this issue of his ministry. He might have kept in hiding until the storm blew over, instead of deliberately blowing up the storm. He might, even upon his trial, have hedged and recanted, and escaped. He might

throughout his ministry have sought to ingratiate himself with the powers that were, instead of speaking out his whole mind whether they liked it or not. Why, then, did he suffer himself to be overtaken by the ignominious shadow of criminal execution, instead of living on to round out his career through the normal allotment of years?

It was not for lack of foresight. For he saw his approaching end long before it reached him, yet fared valiantly forward to meet it. It was not because he was tired of life, so as to welcome an opportunity for suicide by legal process. For no man ever shrank with more palpable sincerity from the ordeal of capital punishment than did our Lord. It must be, then, that his acceptance of the cross was related vitally to his purpose in living. He must have felt that that purpose would not be served by evasion or resistance, whereas it would be served by submission to the worst that the wrath of his enraged opponents could compass.

What was Jesus' purpose in living? Not to gain power or renown for his own selfish satisfaction, but to gain currency for a supremely important truth of which he held himself to be the spokesman. He was the Truth-Teller of the ages, a messenger of good tidings to all the world. To be sure, the temptation to seek selfish

aggrandizement was always with him. He faced it in the wilderness just after his baptism, and again when he entered Jerusalem on the Sunday before his death. But, whenever he confronted this temptation, he overcame it. And those means only he employed which would promote acceptance of the truth he had to set forth.

Christian theology is an attempt, changing with the changing concepts of men's minds through the centuries, to state and elucidate this truth of which Jesus was the bearer and the incarnation. Theology is a complex discipline with many ramifications. But the key to it all is to be found in a perfectly simple assertion, which was the theme of all the sermons Jesus ever preached, and which he expressed in the first phrase of the model prayer: "Our Father, who art in heaven."

If I were to paraphrase that key-text, I should put it in these terms: "The Spirit of the universe is conscious and competent good will." Now perhaps you will not like that paraphrase, because it sounds more academic than religious. But that is why I like it. For we are wont to give an emotional turn to religious utterance which seems to remove religious truth from the sphere of entire and practical reality. We are rather disposed to think of a religious truth as a proposition which we wish were accurate—and in

which we will wistfully pretend to believe—but which, after all, can hardly stand the rough tests of the workaday world. But it was not at all in this way that Jesus thought of his central conviction, the Fatherhood of God. For a truth only half true neither he nor any other man would willingly die. Instead, to him the fundamental verity of life in its spiritual aspect was as plain, as practical, as self-evidencing as any axiom of Euclidian geometry—for instance, that a straight line is the shortest distance between two points.

Now if Jesus' purpose was to gain currency for a practical truth of incalculable moment to all mankind, he could only achieve that purpose by teaching; that is, by stating the truth in such a way as to win attention, so that people would think about it until they saw it, and therefore understood it. The learning process is one of recognition; the teaching process is one of arousing interest in the matter to be recognized. That is why Jesus elected to preach, and did not like to perform wonders. The idly curious might suppose that wonders were his credentials; but he knew that the truth he proclaimed was its own credential, if only he could get people to think about it until they visualized it and found it irresistible, as we visualize the axiom about a straight line and, having once done so, can never

call it into question while we are in our right minds.

But there is this difference between a geometric axiom and Jesus' key-truth, that geometry makes no difference in our way of living, while religion turns us about. Truths potent enough to turn people about often come up against the obstruction of closed minds, minds closed by indolence of brain and atrophy of the imagination, and shuttered and barricaded by jealous self-interest. That, of course, is what happened in Jesus' case. Now what shall we do to win entrance for truth into closed minds? Shall we punish and subdue the bodies through which they function? That is all the angels could have done to the Jews and Romans, if Jesus had summoned them. The Jewish hierarchy and the Roman military state were alike imperiled by the simple but revolutionary truth which Jesus was proclaiming. Temple sacrifices and imperial levies would alike be voided of all significance if once good will were recognized as the law of the universe. But to attempt by physical force to overcome their stubborn antagonism would only arouse resentment, which closes the mind more tightly than ever; it is interest alone which prompts a man to open his mind voluntarily from within, and the doors of the mind cannot be broken in from without. If a man is a coward,

you can force him to say that he believes what you tell him; but in his heart he will disbelieve more vehemently than ever, under this coercion of his body. Swords are the argument of fools, who understand neither the nature of truth nor the way in which it must be imparted.

But, in the absence of the angels, the Jews and the Romans were far more powerful physically than Jesus, who had to stand out against them alone, deserted even by the feeble and futile band of his faint-hearted disciples. So they decided to put an end to the Gospel once for all by making an end of Jesus. And they nailed him to a cross; and he let them. For he knew that, though they broke his body, they could not touch his message. Truth is not of time or space; it cannot be locally isolated, and made to expire by shedding its blood upon a cross. Truth is eternal, and so beyond the reach of fools who seek to assail it, and by so doing merely placard their folly in the derisive view of mankind. So to evade or resist the cross could not have helped, to accept the cross could not hinder, the purpose of Jesus' living.

But to accept the cross could and did marvelously help that purpose. For in teaching the first point is to win attention. And who wins more attention than he who is vilely wronged? It is safe to say that no one who had been of that

surging, hissing, blood-greedy crowd at Calvary ever afterward stopped thinking about the man on the central cross. Nor can the world ever stop thinking about him, and being interested in his message because of his fate. To persecute any doctrine is to advertise it. For, though the docile vulgar may accept what they are told, that the persecution is just, yet all critical and rebellious minds, the saving remnant of society, will react with antagonism toward the persecutors and sympathy for the persecuted, thus opening their minds eagerly to the doctrine violently impugned. It has been said that the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church; this is the reason. It may quite as well be said that the persecution of radicals is the seed of radicalism. The most persuasive publicity socialism has ever received in the United States was the imprisonment of Eugene V. Debs. Nor does this hold true of radicalism only. The triumph of the principle of so-called "legitimacy" at the Congress of Vienna in 1815, marking the defeat of the French Revolution, was a direct consequence of the appeal to the popular imagination in behalf of royal prerogatives which the Revolution made when it slew Louis XVI, the poor drunken incompetent, and Marie Antoinette, a dull and frivolous woman of light character, transfigured in the social memory into saints and martyrs

by pity for the penalty exacted for their follies.

Especially does this principle of recommendation by persecution hold if there be those at hand after the fatal event who are prepared to explain its significance to the intrigued masses in terms favorable to the victim. Of course, that was the case with Jesus' death. He had trained and commissioned the Apostles to propound his key-truth and its corollaries; and he knew that they would also set forth his own character and story with tongues aflame with love and adoration, when once his troubles and their perplexities in his company were over, and the benign immediacy of his radiant personality had become for them a gracious and heroic recollection.

So Jesus went to the cross willingly, because he cared more for truth than for earthly life, and because he knew that the interest necessarily antecedent to the recognition of new truth would be aroused, as in no other way it could be, by his undeserved shame and agony, and would be exploited in behalf of his saving Gospel by his followers. And ever since the cross has been, and so it will remain until the end of time, a beacon lifted high in popular imagination, for all men to view, to interrogate, and to learn therefrom its purport, as the culminating evidence of his sincerity who proclaimed the emancipating truth

that the Spirit of the universe is conscious and competent good will.

This utter loyalty to truth at any cost, which was in the soul of Jesus, has kindled a like loyalty in many souls since his time, won to his selfless viewpoint by contemplation of his cross. This loyalty has been manifested in every region of the pursuit of truth: at the Reformation, chiefly in religion; of late, chiefly in science. The glory of science is the whole-hearted devotion of the scientist to the truth: announcing new discoveries with candor, however they may traverse the cherished prejudice of others; accepting new discoveries in his own field with humility, however they may contravene his most cherished hypotheses. It seems to me not too much to say that Jesus was the first scientist. Of course, I do not mean anything so absurd as that he was the first to explore natural phenomena by the scientific method, or even that he ever did such a thing. Doubtless Aristotle, in our occidental tradition, deserves that place of honor. It was the rediscovery of Aristotle's method at the Renaissance which gave to modern science its technique. But Aristotle was a comfortable dilettante, a mere amateur of the sciences. Jesus was a martyr for the truth. The technique of modern science comes from Aristotle. But the emotional drive which has made men employ that

technique derives from the rediscovery at the Reformation of Jesus' loyalty to truth, as Luther exemplified it, in the very spirit of the cross, at the Diet of Worms, whither he fared with head high and heart bold, though he knew that for him, as for John Huss at Constance a century earlier despite a similar imperial safe-conduct, the stake probably was waiting.

If thus the typical attitude of science, in which our modern time greatly hopes, is supremely illustrated and commended in the example of Jesus, there is also to be found in that example a first hint of democracy, not as the Athenian politicasters had known it, but as we know and love it in the twentieth century. For the cross was an appeal over the heads of the governing classes to the judgment of the common people. Jesus knew that the verdict of the common people, when once by the cross their interest had been aroused in his message to the point of recognizing its truth, would be for him and against his enemies. And he was willing to abide the decision of the court of Demos, with a sublime confidence in the rectitude of ultimate human judgment. Thus it may be said that Jesus' acceptance of the cross, when he might perhaps have resisted it, or certainly have evaded it, is the first and greatest charter of popular government.

Further, in the provision Jesus had made, by training his Apostles as his representatives after he was gone, for the instruction of the popular mind in the meaning of the cross and his ministry, there is to be seen a recognition of the importance of education to a sound public opinion. Every teacher of truth as a platform for social action is in the apostolic succession, whether or no his head have been blessed by a bishop, or his rostrum be a pulpit.

So three of the ascendant emphases in modern humanitarian aspiration and effort are to be found illustrated in the cross of Christ: the scientific attitude of utter and uncompromising loyalty to the truth; faith in the final wisdom of the popular verdict; provision for the instruction of the jury, so to speak, by an educational system. But the meaning of the cross, in this respect, comes home more closely to each of us. It is an invitation, as urgent as the pains of the Crucified, to rest our confidence in persuasion rather than in force, and to dedicate our personal allegiance to the high and supernatural cause of the truth, which is the intellectual phase of the right, to the total disregard of selfish aims envisaging the vanities of comfort and success on the commodity-standard which our animal nature applies to the measurement of life. No man who looks at the cross long enough really

to see its meaning can resist the imperative conviction that truth is and must be held supreme, as Jesus held it.

Nay, the meaning of the cross comes home to us more closely even than this. For, in contemplating the heroism of this loyalty, we cannot overlook the truth which this loyalty subserved. That truth—Jesus saw it as an axiom, obvious, irresistible when once it had been seen and recognized and understood: "Our Father, who art in heaven," or, as we have paraphrased it: "The Spirit of the universe is conscious and competent good will." Is it true? No man can prove it. But no man who has grasped it can disbelieve it. No man can prove, either, that a straight line is the shortest distance between two points. But try to disbelieve it if you will! You and I know, though we know not how we know, that Jesus' key-text is the heart of all truth. When we meditate upon it, deep answers unto deep, and our hearts rise up within us to hail with rejoicing the final solution of the mystery of being.

But what we hail we must also heed. When we heed it, we shall find our lives emptied of fear and filled with gladness, turned from sin and tending toward righteousness. How shall we heed it? Behold the cross! It blazons forth a dynamic conviction, as all the trumpets of all God's angels could not herald it. In the cross

of Christ we glory, because it towers eternally over the wrecks of time at the center of human experience, the focus of interest in a truth perennially new and revolutionizing, calling up from the depths of our being the will and the power to live by its light.

XVIII

NOT OF THIS WORLD

My kingdom is not of this world.—St. John 18:36

Jesus was a king. There was no doubt in the mind of any one who knew him but that as a king he bore himself, and in him inhered an intrinsic authority. But what might be the nature of this authority was a baffling problem. It was not wholly due to voluntary misrepresentation that he was finally put on trial for his life on the charge of sedition, as though by his pretensions to royalty he contemplated a political rôle as the exponent of nationalistic Messianism. It was in part at least due to genuine perplexity as to his claims that this fatal mistake was made. For in the thought-circle of his time no other form of kingship was comprehensible save in presidency over a State. The State, as then, so at many times subsequently, has seemed to most men to be an end in itself; indeed, the supreme end of human existence. Hegel erected this view into his theory of the State supreme and irresponsible; and it is still the key-note of the common conception of patriotism. But Jesus was

not interested in the State as an end. He was indifferent to the details of political constitution and administration. Among types of civic government, his spirit would indeed probably endorse some as relatively better than others; but only on the score of their instrumental efficiency in promoting the authentic interests of humanity, which far transcend the plane of politics.

Jesus, though he disavowed all political aims, was put to death for treason to Cæsar. Almost as soon as the impression of his personality began to fade in their memories, his followers undertook to found in his behalf a kingdom of this world of another type, which they called "the Church." For the Church they devised, in rapid development of its polity, a monarchical hierarchy corresponding to a political peerage in its degrees, and a sacramental system, to the material symbols of which such quasi-magical efficacy was attributed as to render it the equivalent of a scheme of civil government. Against the Church, made and marred by men for their own advantage, masquerading under the name of Christ, a great division of Christendom broke away in successful rebellion at the Reformation. But Protestantism has nevertheless carried on to a lamentable extent the old notion, still asserted by Rome, that the Church is Christ's earthly kingdom, with final and exclusive jurisdiction

over the faith and morals of all mankind, obedience to which in all its enactments is therefore essential to salvation. Since faith may be interpreted as determining all beliefs, and morals as including all conduct, this amounts to a claim of unqualified control over all human affairs. But Jesus was not more interested in a kingdom of this world to be called a Church than in a kingdom of this world to be called a kingdom. Doubtless he would admit that religious organization is as necessary as civic organization, so that there must be a Church or Churches; but, again, as in the case of States, his favor would be distributed among them on the ground of their relative instrumental efficiency in promoting the authentic interests of humanity, rather than for their own sake as ends in themselves.

Most of us, with minds trained in modern learning, see the fallacy of claiming for State or Church any imprescriptible authority. But we still seek to gain the end which Jesus sought, the deliverance of mankind from all kinds of evil, by analogous methods; namely, through organization. We have a mania for organization. Whenever one of us gets an improving idea, he straightway starts a society to propagate it; and begins to feel that his cause is won when constitution and by-laws have been duly engrossed, and a president, a secretary and a treasurer have

been regularly elected. Missionary societies, political clubs, labor unions, manufacturers' associations, the Anti-Saloon League, the League of Nations—doubtless these are all good and useful associations; but to suppose, as many enthusiasts apparently do, that salvation is a matter primarily of successful organization, in any of the fields in which we may need it, is nothing other than to try to set up new kingdoms of this world for Christ. And he wants no kingdom of this world. Not that he would not endorse and favor any organization actually serviceable for a legitimate humanitarian end; but that he has no faith or interest in organizations for their own sake.

A fourth error concerning our Lord's kingship comes about by way of extreme reaction from all this worldliness of identifying his cause with the State, the Church, or any earthly organization. We are invited to believe that, because his kingdom is not of this world, it must therefore be of the next world, the world to which the redeemed will go after death; and that there they will behold their Savior robed in regal splendor, crowned and enthroned in dazzling majesty, supervising the business of the universe, and preparing to return to our planet panoplied in radiant might as Judge of all the earth. Now that Jesus still lives, that his spirit

is emancipated from the limitations of time and space, that he is everywhere and effectively present with his servants as the captain of our salvation, I do most firmly believe. But that in any world he who in this world despised and rejected the futile insignia of vainglorious rank would covet and appropriate these insignia I cannot at all suppose. For that implies a deplorable change in his heart and disposition. However justifiable the apocalyptic imagery of Scriptures and creeds may be to kindle in the minds of the faithful a poetic appreciation of our Lord's actual supremacy, it must not be taken literally. For, wherever his spirit is operative, it must still be consistent with his spirit when his crown was of thorns and his throne was a cross. He has not stopped serving and sacrificing and begun to reign. He reigns by serving and sacrificing.

What, then, was and is Christ's kingdom, if it be neither a political State under his sway, nor an earthly Church in his name, nor any crusading organization, nor courts of gold and porphyry in the sky? Christ's kingdom is the realm of the ideal. If that sounds vague and abstract to us, it is because we fail to appreciate the tremendous and terrible potency of ideals. An ideal is an idea infused with a moral dynamic; and ideas are of vastly more weight and moment

than things, even in practical affairs. Ideals are the things really worth living for. They are vital values, in striking contrast to the market values which this thoughtless world holds dear. Jesus' subjects are they who live, as he lived, for these vital values, for things not purchasable with gold, but only with the coin of character. And all who choose this spiritual currency recognize upon it Christ's image and superscription, and cannot but acclaim him as sovereign of the realm of the ideal, to which their souls render allegiance.

Now, while Jesus cares naught for kingdoms of this world, the whole purpose of his ministry and Gospel is to set up his spiritual kingdom—the realm of the ideal—in ascendancy over this world. If we have rightly gauged the crass and gross materialism of most of the inhabitants of this planet in our own and all earlier times, we must acknowledge that to win this ascendancy is an enormous undertaking. But who ever supposed that the cause of Christ could be lightly won? He had to die, to start it on its way; multitudes have died since his death, to keep it going forward; the end is not yet, nor will it come soon. But Jesus' approach to kingship over men is through the individual. It is as individuals learn of him to live for the things that really count, that the world will be brought onward toward the

heavenly allegiance. So Christianity, despite all its social implications, has to do primarily with the individual, with you and me, that we may live aright.

Now let us note some of the facts about Christ's kingdom—the realm of the ideal—which differentiate it from the kingdoms of this world. First, the kingdoms of this world require of their subjects acceptance of things as they are. The king rules by divine right; or, the constitution is the last word in political wisdom: to question that dogma is to invite suspicion of one's loyalty. There is also in every land a patriotic mythology which must be swallowed whole: in all our wars our side was always right; all our heroes were immaculate, and all the enemies' corrupt; William the Conqueror was England's benefactor, Victoria was a great and good queen, or Washington was the greatest general and most impeccable Christian in history, and Lincoln a nineteenth-century Messiah. To be sure, some of us do apply the higher criticism to such dogma and mythology, but most of our compatriots are very sure that such of us as do are disloyal. Now I am well aware that similar standards of rectitude through literal acceptance of codes, formulæ and hagiologies have been repeatedly set up by the Church in Christ's name, as tests of allegiance to him. But he did not set them up. He

neither accepted old authorities for more than they were actually worth, nor did he set up a new authority which must be accepted on faith without scrutiny. The one fundamental principle of access to Jesus' kingdom, the domain of vital values, is that a man be never content with things as they are, but be ever in quest of higher and clearer revelations of the right and the true.

Again, the kingdoms of this world exact obedience of all whom they control—who are called subjects, indeed, because they are under subjection to an external compulsion to conform with the State's requirements. But in Christ's kingdom bonds are loosed, the prisoners of law are set free, and a man no longer has to do what he does not want to do, but can do just as he pleases. Of course that sounds anarchic; and, when this clause of the constitution of Christ's kingdom is promulgated without its context, anarchy does result. But he who has complied with the prerequisites for admission to the jurisdiction of the ideal, under Christ as his Sovereign—that is, who has decided to live for the things really worth living for, and who is engaged in an eager and unremitting quest of the right and the true—cannot possibly want to do what under just and reasonable law he ought not to do. For external compulsion, however, is substituted the internal propulsion of a love of righteousness; and that

is freedom. For to be free does not mean to do wrong without interference, since that brings a man into slavery to sin; but to do right by one's own choice, since that brings a man out on a higher level, with a wider range, of confident and joyous experience.

This substitution of love for law as the principle of control within Christ's kingdom is paralleled by substitution of persuasion for force in the conquests of his kingdom. The kingdoms of this world carry on their conquests in arms. David, whose successor Jesus was alleged to have claimed to be, was a warrior extending the bounds of his empire by the ruthless advance of his armies. Cæsar, against whom Jesus' alleged Davidic claim was taken to be an offense, was pushing out the limits of Rome's territories with a mailed fist. But Jesus scorned conquest by legions, whether of Romans or of angels; it was by the light of reason and the warmth of his good will that he sought to attach men to himself, and he would not stoop to conquer them on any other terms. To be sure, the Church has often blessed wars, and almost as often inspired and fought wars. But not so Christ. His is ever the power of truth and love only, by his own choice. He who has learned of Christ what are the vital values of life can never willingly take the sword, for he knows that in the long run the sword is im-

potent, while truth and love are omnipotent.

There remains a further telling contrast, which comes home with especial force to us in this flamboyant age, between the kingdoms of this world and Christ's kingdom, the realm of the ideal. The kings of this world are greedy to get, that they may indulge in display; and of their servitors those commonly achieve first rank who, like these princes, get all they can, by any means available, and spend all they can in extravagant splendor of selfish ostentation. That is a procedure which we understand all too well; we feel the pull of its attraction. To make money, and to keep up appearances—these are the passionate urges which have superseded ideals in many Americans today. But Jesus came not to be ministered unto but to minister. He said: "He that would be greatest among you, let him be your servant." His whole life was one of giving, until he gave his life itself on Calvary. And almost every time he opened his lips he warned his hearers against greed and vanity. The man who has thought things through far and clearly enough to discern what are the things really worth living for, finds these warnings written on his own heart in letters of fire. Not to get, but to give; not to squander on self, but to consecrate one's substance in helping others—this tribute of spontaneous and unlim-

ited generosity Christ the Eternal King pays to his subjects, and asks them to distribute it in his name in the world, instead of grinding the face of the poor to fill their coffers, as do the kings of this world.

What a wonderful day it will be when Christ's kingdom, the realm of the ideal, the domain of vital values, is ascendant on the earth! Love will have cast out fear; the persuasions of reason will have conquered the resistance of stubborn error in every field of human concern; the spirit of brotherhood will have leveled the excesses of riches and poverty as no egalitarian legislation could of itself conceivably do. It will not matter, then, what forms the institutions of society may assume, what laws may be on the statute-books. For not by legal devices will mankind's deliverance from evil have been wrought, but by a new spirit—the true human spirit which is at the same time divine—come to manifestation in the general conduct.

But what chance is there that such a consummation will ever be achieved? Is it conceivable that humanity in general can ever be made deep, careful and sincere enough in mind to decide deliberately to put ideals in control of all living, as they were in control of Christ's life? Perhaps not. We need not wait, however, until society in general is raised to this level. For, under

every form of government, it is always a thoughtful minority which controls. Our trouble just now is that the minority in control takes thought chiefly for its own advantage. It is to change this situation that the Gospel is in the world. When there are enough Christians—a clear-headed, aggressive, compact minority, not for the polemic vindication of dogma but for the irenic promotion of moral sanity—to hold the balance of power in determining social policies, then the masses will follow suit, and society will take its tone from Christian idealism, which from that point on will propagate itself by the contagion of this salutary example.

Great progress has already been made. It is a changed world in which we live from the world in which Jesus lived: not only or chiefly in the external appurtenances of civilization; but in the humanitarian spirit—the generous idealism—which, despite its many deficiencies, current society does increasingly emphasize. I do not suppose that moral idealism will conquer the world by its benign persuasions in any near generation or early century; but that conquest is going forward. Christ is its Commander. His authority lies in the fact that he incarnates the ideal before our eyes, and by his love commends it to our hearts. If you and I will seek the right and the true, and will put love above law and giving

above getting as Jesus did, then we shall find ourselves living in Christ's kingdom, which is not of this world, and helping to bring the kingdoms of this world under his beneficent sway.

XIX

LOYALTY

One thing I do.—PHILIPPIANS 3:13

THIS is, I believe, the shortest text from which I have ever preached. In the original Greek it consists of two words only, of two letters each. Yet it strikes me as one of the most significant in Holy Writ, as sounding the essential note for that type of life which is in the best sense successful.

Our first thought, upon considering these words, amid the manifold duties of our complicated modern living, may well be one of envious comparison of the innumerable demands upon our time and attention with the good old days when it was possible, as St. Paul seems to assure us here, to do one thing only; and presumably, therefore, to do that one thing thoroughly. Every one of us has so many things to do, if he would hold his place and vindicate his right to existence in our strenuous age, that most of the things we undertake must of necessity be but half done. If only the pressure were less intense, and our careers could be simplified,

how much more competent we should be, and how much more we should enjoy our work! But of what avail can it be to hold up such a maxim as this as an ideal, in a day when obligations are of inescapable necessity multiplied to such an extent that to follow this maxim literally is obviously impossible?

An answer to that objection will, however, suggest itself to all who are acquainted with the actual circumstances of the Apostle who thus declares, "One thing I do." For St. Paul had as complex a career, with as varied claims upon his interest and ingenuity, as any modern man. He is best known to us as a writer—the first of the great theologians of the Christian Church, whose teachings, however obsolete in some of their aspects, still remain so striking a record of searching reflection upon an authentic and exalted spiritual experience as to be perennially cogent for our instruction. But he was also a preacher, to vast multitudes of many nations—which is quite another matter from the composition of philosophical treatises. He was, further, a general superintendent and administrator of ecclesiastical affairs, discharging executive functions of incalculable importance and value to the Churches throughout a wide area, and doing so with singular tact and efficiency. Moreover, in order thus to preach and to administer, he was

a traveler over most of the roads of the wide Roman Empire. And, that his support and the expenses of his journeys might not be a charge upon these early adherents of the Gospel, who in the things of this world were as a rule the poorest of the poor, he earned his own livelihood and way by working with his hands as a tentmaker. Thus we know that he was regularly engaged in no less than five distinct enterprises; and doubtless others also might be enumerated. How then could a man whose occupations rivaled if they did not surpass our own in variety and urgency, claim that to one thing his energies were constantly devoted?

Clearly this one thing cannot have been one type of activity. It must, then, have been one purpose, infusing the whole range of his diffuse efforts and uniting them together into a solidarity of aim and consciousness. But unity of endeavor, in this sense, is as attainable in the twentieth century as in the first, and will always continue to be the mark of a life well conducted and broadly serviceable.

A radical difference in character results from two contrasted orders of unifying purpose. If a man defines his aim within the limitations of his own interest, he will be a man of a different sort from him whose purpose transcends self, seeking to render generous service to some in-

terest greater and more enduring than his own earthly life. Yet even a firm and persistent selfishness, with a relatively remote aim replacing the sensations of the passing moment as its goal, produces a better result than the mere indulgence of impulses and following of whimsies in which many people dissipate their powers. A few months ago I met again a young man whom I had not seen for more than ten years. When I had last known him, he was a wastrel, amiable and attractive but weak, foul of habit, and undependable as to his intentions. When I met him again, I felt as though I were encountering a total stranger; for in the long interval of our separation he had become a successful business man —clean, competent, unquestionably straight (as I believe) in financial matters, and rendering a real service to the community through his single-minded devotion to the business in which he is engaged. He is not only changed almost beyond recognition by having embraced a clear-cut ambition to accumulate a fortune and become a powerful figure in the commercial world, but is also undeniably a much better man than he was before. Yet I find myself, when I think of him, regretting this salutary alteration; for something good has gone from his soul—a gentleness, a friendliness, which made his personality far more ingratiating in the past than it is now. He

has grown hard, cold, and aloof in a detached and calculating dedication of all his capacities to his own advantage. His every thought bears the dollar sign. He chose well in deciding to focus his scattered impulses upon one central aim; but, alas, he made the grievous mistake of not looking beyond himself when he defined that aim.

The consequences are equally unsatisfactory, moreover, when a selfish motive of a more refined order is entertained. For instance, to seek breadth and depth of intelligence, merely for the satisfaction and honor to be won thereby, rather than as an instrument for more effective service, produces a rigid, frigid cast of personality, conceited and pedantic; not prone, to be sure, to be vicious, but assuredly the reverse of magnetic or deserving of gratitude and remembrance.

There is no need to specify that it was not himself whom St. Paul sought to serve when he yielded his life to one dominant purpose. The Apostle to the Gentiles stands in history as the type of man who subordinates self to a loftier and temporally more enduring object of his devotion. When to such objects of our devotion we offer only the passive tribute of our admiration or affection, that mood corresponds to the commonly accepted sense of the word

"love," which in general usage is rather a weak term. But when, in expression of our love, we pour forth the energies of our being in a concentrated profusion of generous and sacrificial service, so that our deeds translate our thoughts into reality, then the best of English words to describe this mood, at once more practical and more honorable, is "loyalty." And it is loyalty —that is, an effective consecration of our lives to the service of an end bigger than ourselves— which alone can give dignity and beauty to our souls. The hagiology of the Church, the roll of the world's heroes, and our own observation in the humbler circles of our immediate acquaintance, are unanimous in confirming the conviction that in proportion to a man's loyalty are the strength, the charm, and the influence of his manhood.

Wide is the range of possible objects for such loyalty. Most conspicuous, perhaps, in this range, stands loyalty to principle. That man has already gone far toward the acquisition of the higher personal integrity whose aim it is, in every aspect and relationship of his existence, to do the right and to follow the truth. Many are the beguiling errors to which we would like to cleave, in preference to truths often uncomfortable and depressing to the natural sense; but the man of principle forswears the blandishments

of illusion in stern commitment to the accurate and dependable. Many are the pleasant sins into which men slip easily, and for which it is not hard to find plausible excuse; but the man of principle cares not for weak excuses, or the perverse encouragements of an indulgent public opinion, or even for the shelter of complete concealment; he will do right, in spite of men and devils.

Yet there is something harsh and repellent—a lack of geniality and human feeling—about mere loyalty to principle, so that they who unify their lives upon this first level of noble aspiration appear rather as monuments of repression than as heroes of righteousness. A further step on the way of enduring spiritual attainment is to give one's loyalty to some altruistic cause. It is under the leadership of the devotees of causes, even when these causes have been short-sightedly conceived, that our race has been led upon the path of social progress. For, even though the reform advocated by such devotees be inadequate, or ill advised, yet the urgency of their championship of its program, and consequently of their indictment of the evils it is designed to remedy, will force upon public attention the need for improvement in the matters thus brought into the foreground, and betterment will then presently be almost inevitably brought

to pass. And when the cause thus advocated is actually a just and imperative one, above the intelligent criticism of the well disposed, as in the cases, for instance, of the movements against slavery, the liquor traffic, political and economic discrimination against women, and child labor, how splendid are the results to the commonwealth of the fearless dedication of their sponsors to these causes; how radiantly do their characters shine in the grateful recollection of posterity; how worthy they are to be numbered among the immortally blessed servants of God!

But a worthy cause ministers, as we have seen, to the well-being of society. Therefore loyalty to the common interests of mankind, broadly conceived and perspicaciously pursued, is even higher, because more balanced and comprehensive, than the advocacy of any single ameliorative movement. Thus it is that loyalty is more clearly associated for us, and seems to us more admirable, in connection with a human group than with any idea however reasonable and exalted. To be sure, loyalty of this sort has sometimes suffered deplorable perversions; as when loyalty to the Church has issued in oppressive bigotry, or loyalty to a nation has issued in arrogant, aggressive, militaristic nationalism. But in both these instances, and others like them, the initial impulse of devotion is admirable; its

lamentable outcome is due to an irrational provincialism of purview. For no Churches, on a fair understanding of their functions, are rivals one of another; and no nations can safely profit at one another's expense. The Churches and the nations of the world can and must work together for their own higher good and that of humanity. For all who have grasped the basic truth of human unity, and who have patience for the long process through diversity by means of which alone that unity can be actualized, will comprehend that the varying traditions and organizations of society sacred and secular have mutually supplementary services to render to the human family as a whole, ministering in their peculiar ways to peculiar situations and temperaments, but with a common and inclusive end in view—the fraternity of all creeds and races, united by common adoration of the All-Father. And this social loyalty, thus carried to its ultimate term, is the dominant note of current ethical idealism, imparting to the nobler and finer souls or our time a humanitarian zeal which no bitter embroilments of sectarians or soldiers can quench or dampen.

But how is one to maintain this wide-viewed humanitarianism, and at the same time keep his feet so firmly on the ground as to make it practically effective? Certainly not by closeted

dreaming of the ultimate phase of historic human unity, some centuries or millennia hence. Rather by realizing that the Church, the nation, and the all-inclusive human group, are alike made up of individuals, and by sustaining this broader loyalty to all mankind upon an uncompromising loyalty to the individuals in our own limited circles. The finest of all loyalties under heaven, fundamental to these other types of devotion which we have been considering, is the loyalty of friend to friend—bearing in mind, in making this assertion, that friendship is the essence of all intimate human relations. And many a man whose thoughts are not large enough to conceive principle, or a cause, or an institution, or humanity, as an abstraction or generalization, has at one step reached the essential point by practicing utter fidelity in his personal relations. For this, at least, we all can understand; and this we all can do, though not always easily. We have not learned the meaning of loyal friendship until we have discovered the possibility of loving our friends, and steadfastly seeking to serve them, even though they hurt us; of taking a tenderly protective attitude, instead of one of resentment and retaliation, when their faults are displayed at our expense. The way to have friends is to be a friend. The way to be a friend is to forget one's self in con-

stant remembrance of one's associates and their needs, in unwavering intention to help them and bless them. And he who is a true friend cannot fail of dignity and beauty of character, or to grow into the larger dimensions of more comprehensive loyalties.

But we have not yet defined the essence of St. Paul's loyalty. He was a true friend; he cared supremely for the Church and for the world's redemption; his cause was that of the Gospel; his principles were those of righteousness and truth. But all these lesser devotions were subsumed and amalgamated in a sublime and central loyalty of his heart to the Lord Jesus Christ. For Christ is a man, and all men's friend; his task is the world's redemption; his is every cause in promotion of social progress; in him the principles of eternal being are rendered luminous to our understanding. I doubt whether humanitarian zeal could long be maintained against the discouragements of actual human degeneracy and obliquity if it were not grounded generally in loyalty to Jesus, regarded as at least the consummate expression of general human potentialities, but sooner or later held by most who thus honor him to be also a transcript of the divine nature for man's perusal. It was by the flame of this devotion to his Master and ours that St. Paul's soul was cleansed of all

self-seeking, and that his mind was enlightened for the faithful discharge of his complicated duties as elements of one dominant purpose, the service of God, and of man for God's sake. And it is only by a like devotion, engaging the utmost ardor of our Lord's deeds and nature, to the glory of his name, that we also can be lifted out of the vulgar treadmill of aimlessly selfish living to stand before men and in the presence of God as spirits emancipated and ennobled, reflecting the radiance of the divine love.

It is true that we have a great many things to do. But why are we doing them? Can we afford just to live from day to day, performing our manifest and inescapable functions as human beings, without any regnant spiritual urge to give drive and direction to our haphazard expenditure of life's forces? Where shall we be, what shall we have accomplished, who will remember us, what shall we deserve at the hands of God our Judge, when we are through, if we do so? If we would make our lives count, would have our influence endure, would enable our souls to grow in our lesser ways, but after the same fashion as St. Paul, we too must focus our hopes, our desires and our efforts upon one coördinating sin. And in the choice of that aim we can do no better—I for one dare do no other—than did the great Apostle: the dedica-

tion of every thought and act to Christ, whom we love and who loves us, and by whose aid alone we shall be made strong to maintain our principles, to embrace and serve such important causes as should engage our direct coöperation, to promote the true interest of Church and nation, and in the intimate relations of our daily course to bring happiness to our associates by the outpouring of the serene grace of our consistent, and if need be self-immolating, consecration to their peace and welfare.

XX

TOLERANCE

Refrain from these men, and let them alone; if then this counsel or this work be of men it will be overthrown: but if it is of God, ye will not be able to overthrow them; lest haply ye be found even to be fighting against God.

—Acts 5:38, 39

Gamaliel was the greatest of the masters of Hebrew theology in the first century, and had been St. Paul's teacher. In the advice he gave the Sanhedrin concerning the preaching of St. Peter and his associates, he afforded not only to the leaders of his own people in his own time, but to all the world in every age, a striking example of broad-mindedness and tolerance. We must remember that Gamaliel had no inside information as to the peculiar and supreme veracity of the Gospel. To him the apostolic message was but the aftermath of a popular religious movement already, by the execution of its leader, placed under public ban as seditious. Nevertheless he maintained that the questions raised by the Apostles ought to be answered by spokesmen of orthodox Israel in an academic manner, so to speak, rather than by recourse

to police measures. We may well wish that not only the opponents but also the representatives of Christian faith might always be like-minded. There would be far less needless strife in the world if decisions as to final truth were left peaceably to time, which tests all things, in lieu of the recurring attempts to establish them prematurely by forcible means.

The first quality which we remark in Gamaliel, as he thus stands forth in advocacy of merciful fair dealing with supposititious heretics, is generosity. This trait, in this and other manifestations, is the prime index of a noble soul. Though we ourselves are sometimes tempted to harshness, yet when we stand aside to observe others in like situations we cannot but feel that calumny and persecution as defences of the faith are employed only by mean and petty minds, whereas superior intelligence and integrity are alike attested by a tone of courteous forbearance.

But, on second thought, quite as striking as his generosity is Gamaliel's common sense. For, after all, if we believe that there is such a thing as absolute truth—that is to say, exact correspondence of human opinion with ultimate reality—we cannot doubt but that opinions at variance with reality must, when allowed full and free expression, sooner or later be disproved by

facts. In the realm of politics, the protection of non-violent minorities in their right to their own views is the distinguishing mark of democracy, the most advanced and idealistic, and at the same time destined, as I believe, to prove itself the most practicable, of governmental forms. In the realm of religion likewise we must come to the concept of a commonwealth of truth-seekers, in which all varieties of dissent from the prevalent views are and of right ought to be regarded as ministering in the end to the sanity and security of general enlightenment.

The first reason why all shades of belief should be tolerated is an ethical one. For dignity and beauty of character are only to be had on condition of whole-hearted loyalty to some end of personal service, transcending the limitations of self-interest. And the most significant and valuable of such ends, because going deeper and including more within its scope than any other, is religious faith. No doubt it is abstractly desirable that one faith only, and that of course the right one, be shared by all who address themselves honestly to the improvement of life's opportunities. But the fact is, and against it there is no wisdom in rebelling, that at the present stage of human development many faiths divide the allegiance of the righteous. And a sympathetic observer of the charac-

ters of men of many religions cannot fail to note that genuine devotion, even to what to us may seem reprehensible error, is in its effects upon the souls of those who entertain it the moral equivalent of a like earnest persuasion of a more defensible creed. So, since in fact all men do not think alike in matters of religion, we ought to rejoice when we find any man pursuing a course which leads to elevation of character by surrendering himself enthusiastically to any type of faith; since the world is inevitably made better by moral achievement in whatsoever devious ways it be attained, while our race is held back in its spiritual progress not by heresies chiefly, but by frivolous and purposeless living.

There are, however, three conditions which we are entitled to exact of those to whom we extend tolerance as to opinions which we deem subversive of accuracy. First, they must hold these subversive opinions honestly. That is, no man who respects the powers of the human mind can be indulgent of sham. There is a great deal of sham belief everywhere, in orthodox circles not less and perhaps (as I sometimes fear) even more than among dissenters from the tenets of the majority. The one service among many disservices rendered the public by such noxious though brilliant journals as the American Mer-

cury is that they take an honorable delight in exposing shams and puncturing poses. Most of us can remember periods of our own mental growth, perhaps in college days, when we espoused unpopular views or causes by way of mere pretentious self-assertion. We deserved then no tolerance; and, fortunately for our subsequent advance toward sincerity, we usually encountered rude, ruthless and stingingly supercilious correction. But, on the other hand, though it will seem surprising to the man who is imprisoned within the narrow circle of his own ideas, it is nevertheless true that utter sincerity is to be found in the ranks of believers in all the peculiar dogmas, whether outmoded or extravagantly novel, within the realm of religious theory. And toward such honesty—an authentic seeking after truth, however misguided—we must be generous, if we would justify our own claim to hold and express our opinions unmolested.

The second requirement which we are entitled to exact is that he who professes religious views in contrast with our own take them seriously, and work with all his might at his religion, whatever it may be. For it is only through consistent and energetic representation that the element of truth in any system of belief is made available for general adoption, and that the elements of

error therein are brought into that overt conflict with facts by which they are destined to be discredited. He also serves the cause of truth, therefore, who vigorously propounds errors honestly held. So, if I may be permitted to illustrate from my pastoral experience, it has long been my practice in encountering religious vagaries among my people not to rebuke what I may deem their departures from the faith, but rather to encourage them to make the most of their new outlook, in order by experimentation to get all that it has for them, and perhaps the sooner to return to more normal states of mind. For instance, when, as occasionally happens, a parishioner informs me, with embarrassment occasioned by fear of my reproaches, that he has latterly become interested in Christian Science, I am not shocked outwardly, or even inwardly, or at all inclined to inveigh against this nascent attachment to a theological position which I personally cannot accept. Instead, I ask at once: "Are you really working at it? Do you read your lesson-sermon every day?" For it is an insult alike to Christian Science and to Congregationalism for a Congregationalist to take up Christian Science unless he really means business. Again, when I talk with a man who declares himself a Catholic, I will not argue with him as to the cardinal tenet of his Church—the

papal succession in the Petrine supremacy—which seems to me historically and logically untenable. But I do want to know: "Are you a practicing Catholic? Do you go regularly to confession and the Holy Communion?" For there is no value at all that I can see in Catholicism, or for that matter in any other system, as a mere set of controversial assertions; but there may be very great value in earnest devotion to the offices even of that belated survival of illiberal medievalism, while there is assuredly no peace of heart for the man who is in belief honestly a Catholic and in action furtively a pagan.

The third of these requirements is that they whom we cannot help deeming heretics extend to us a reciprocal indulgence corresponding in kind and degree to the tolerance we manifest toward them. The one error strictly intolerable, whether in religion or in any other region of inquiry, is the desire to employ physical force for the establishment of ideas. In our republic, we can and must tolerate all shades of radicalism, so long as it is proposed to proceed in accordance with the Constitution and the laws of the land toward the inauguration of a new political or economic order; but we dare not and ought not to tolerate the advocacy of the violent overthrow of the existing order. Likewise, in religion, we can be on terms of friendship with

all who will accept and respond to our friendship; but any proposal to coerce opinion in support of any creed, however correct, must find arrayed against it a coalition of all other creedal groups which participate in a confidence in truth itself strong enough to make them scornful of mere might.

A second reason why tolerance should be extended in matters of religion is intellectual in its nature. It has to do with the attitude of our minds toward the whole problem presented by competitive creeds. It is doubtless more honest, in view of our limited information, as well as more generous, not to try to determine on what intellectual ground Gamaliel advocated tolerance toward the Apostles. But in general three different motives of this sort are found operative in producing a bearing of generous and fraternal common sense toward all varieties of religious conviction.

First, some men are tolerant through indifference. Such men may or may not be nominally adherents of some one system of belief. In either case they feel inwardly that on these subjects no one really knows or can know what is true; therefore they are not worth quarreling about. That agnostic mood is perhaps especially prevalent in our time. Permit me, without arguing the question at length, simply to state

that such indifference seems to me to be morally depressing and philosophically unjustifiable.

A second motive of this sort may be a contemptuous condescension to the supposedly lower mental capacities of all who hold opinions differing from ours. We express this idea when we say, as we often do, "He is doing the best he can by such light as he has." But the test of tolerance is its effect upon those to whom its courtesy is extended. True tolerance will make them grateful and happy, and go a long way toward inspiring them with a real regard for those who exercise it. But such tolerance as this is positively infuriating. Therefore it is not true tolerance at all. Would you like to be told that you are a Congregationalist because you do not know any better? Then how do you suppose a Catholic or a Christian Scientist (to revert to the examples already alluded to) will enjoy such an attitude on your part toward him? This arrogance has, moreover, of course, a deleterious effect upon the man himself who indulges in it. Contempt for men of other minds is occasioned by, and affords encouragement to, a monstrous conceit; and conceit is not, to say the least, a spiritual desideratum.

The third and only right motive of an intellectual order for tolerance of divergencies in religious opinion is a sense of humility, in candid

acknowledgment that our minds also have limitations and probably do not grasp the truth with perfect clearness in its entirety, so that we welcome contributions to our understanding of infinite reality—the being and creation of God—from every quarter. This is not to say that we will compromise our own conviction, or attempt to hold simultaneously contradictory views on the same subject. But it does assert that there is some truth as well as some error in every creed, and that the perfect creed, combining all truths and eliminating all errors, has not yet been formulated. It will often happen, indeed, that the sympathetic student will find help and light in theological systems from which in the main he radically dissents. To revert again to our previously cited instances: the root of Catholicism as an organic complex of doctrines is the dogma of Roman supremacy, which we cannot accept; but who can peruse the writings of the great Catholic theologians, or scrutinize the careers of some Catholic saints, or observe the learning and piety actually displayed today within that communion, without gaining fresh insight into the splendor of the Divine Being and the majesty of eternal truth, and a renewed inspiration to reverence and devotion? Again, from the denial by Christian Science of the substantive validity of pain we turn away repelled by what seems to us to be a

denial of all essential significance to the cross; but who can talk with a convinced Christian Scientist about his faith without admiring the practical and sustained awareness of the effective presence of God in his life which such a believer usually enjoys, and which we are wont, to our inestimable loss, not to cultivate? Thus it seems to me that the ultimate ground of our tolerance of religious differences should be a modest and open-minded admission that of them who seek to know God all hold some truths and none hold all truths, so that the final harmony of creeds in a united Church, for which we hope when the Kingdom of God shall have come upon the earth, is best promoted by mutual friendliness and respect and a candid comparison of contrasting viewpoints.

So the humility as to our own attainments thus far in the pursuit of truth, which underlies true tolerance, issues in an inspiring hopefulness. We can afford to be patient and brotherly amid the dissensions which mark this stage of religious progress, as the like of them have marked all stages hitherto; and we must seek, in constant expression of this attitude, to replace vain controversies with understanding and mutual esteem among the parties to them. For since God is one, and through Christ and all His lesser prophets is leading mankind toward unity with

Him, the one truth will some day shine forth to enlighten all the ends of the earth; and that one truth, when it appears, will focus all the many-colored rays of our varying theological opinions in the white radiance of the Sun of Righteousness, at length dispelling every error, casting out every disease by the healing in its wings, and making clear in the sight of all men what now we see but darkly looming through the mists of ignorance and prejudice, the brotherhood of mankind, as children of one Heavenly Father.

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